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The Farm at San Benito, Mandala win first Asia-Pacific spa awards

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Free-for-all cuts short Pacers-Pistons match

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St. Theresa's College Manila: Landmark school lives again

JOB
3 sections of Jobfair: 5,700 openings

Final Quarter final! Next draw is Monday, Nov. 22

Authors in denial, stand by error-filled history book

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

IT'S A TEXTBOOK only in author's unchastised mind here.

Historians, teachers and socio-education officials all

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Clash of egos: 'Big 3' versus 'Solid 7' at ABS-CBN TV

By Louie C. Cimino
Entertainment Editor
and Marinel R. Cruz

IT'S THE "Big 3" versus the "Solid 7" war ABS-CBN insider says of the latest turmoil in the country's leading television network.

It's a clash of the "Big egos" in the two

Sunday, November 21, 2004 • 36 pages / vol. 19 / no. 347

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'Crumbs don't make feast'

Budget chief defends pork, corruption now limited

By Jobel Lalog Bonifacio, Carlito Pablo and Marinel Sam Dhao

FOR EVERY peso in the proposed 2005 budget, only one quarter of one centavo will go to the pork barrel of the entire House of Representatives.

"Mga pitaklets really. Crumbs don't make a feast," said House appropriations committee chair, Rep. Rolando Andaya (LP, Camarines Sur), to show that the pork barrel won't make a dent on the country's fiscal situation.

Andaya said that of the total P907.6 billion budget, only P4.7 billion will go to congressmen in pork barrel funds, or P20 million for each of the 230 House members. In addition, each congressman will get another P20 million as "disaster development funds."

At the Palace, apparently triggered on the decision of the House to fully restore the pork barrel in the 2005 budget, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin yesterday joined the chorus of legislators defending the much-maligned pork barrel system.

"The wastage of pork barrel is now very limited compared to, say 10 years ago. Now, I would say only a very small percentage (is lost to corruption). It's not that in the minds of the people, pork barrel is associated with corruption," Boncodin said in an ERMI interview.

Boncodin joined the statement defending the pork barrel, officially called the Priority Development Assistance Fund or PDAF, in the wake of allegations that it had been abused and was perceived as a major source of corruption.

"I think the root cause of that is the assumption that all pork barrel funds are lost to corruption which I think is a very unfair assumption," Boncodin said.

On Wednesday, members of the House decided to retain their entire pork barrel and ignore a Palace request to slash the allocations by 40 percent to avert a fiscal crisis. This, such compromise will still receive P70 million in pork barrel funds in 2005.

But Boncodin cautioned the House could subject the entire pork barrel,

THE BITTER TASTE OF SUGAR. The laborers in sugarland run wildly through the Hacienda Luisita plantation after riled since Nov. 4 after the CBA negotiations between the workers and management collapsed, a strike ensued, but violence was put up such a violent dispersal killed 14 and hurt about 200 people. But the sugar cane can't wait. It's now ready for harvest. Otherwise it is feared it has its quality would deteriorate. And everyone loses. (See story on Page A6)

GMA at Apec; no 1-on-1 meeting with Bush

SANTIAGO, Chile— Leaders of 21 Pacific Rim economies opened a two-day summit Saturday aimed at liberalizing their trade and addressing US concerns over global security following protests that erupted in gunfire and injured at least three people.

The violence started late Friday night after US President George W. Bush arrived in Santiago and ended early Saturday morning.

President Macapagal-Arroyo arrived Friday night before the violence occurred. She had no scheduled one-on-one meeting with Bush.

Only a bilateral meeting with Chilean President Ricardo Lagos Escobar was listed in Ms. Arroyo's official schedule released by Malacañang. But she planned to meet with Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin on the summit sidelines, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said.

The welfare and increased deployment of Filipino workers, particularly caregivers, to Canada are expected to be discussed in Ms. Arroyo's talks with Martin.

The number of documented OFWs in Canada grew by 13.3 percent to 6,000 last year from 5,505 in 2003. Last year, Canada took in some 1,811 Filipino caregivers.

Bush met Saturday with Chinese President Hu Jintao and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. He was also scheduled for one-on-one meetings with the leaders of South Korea, Indonesia, Canada and Russia.

A military police captain and a shop worker were injured in different areas of Santiago, as a fresh round of protests broke out after 250 demonstrators were arrested.

Earlier, at least 25,000 protesters op-

Even GMA can't intervene in UP president election

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE SHADOW in the election for the University of the Philippines president has thrown the country's top academic institution into a state of "suspension."

UP officials and alumni are appalled over a turmoil similar to that which gripped the university in 1958 when its president was elected by the Board of Regents (BOR), its governing body.

Asked if Malacañang could intervene in case of a close deadlock, university and BOR member Prof. Rhodel Cerqueña said the UP Charter was clear that only the regents could elect a UP president.

"Bal. let's be realistic," he said. "It—and only it—it seems is inconvenient, putting prohibits Malacañang from doing that. But our regents are independent-minded. It's been proven in several instances that they vote according to their conscience."

With the appointees in the board, Malacañang would seem to enjoy an advantage as far as its candidate was concerned.

"Hopefully, somebody will come up with a unifying recommendation to enable the board to break a tie," Cerqueña said.

"Everybody seems to be resilient. It's a difficult time. Despite me talking about the consensus (should the BOR fail to elect a president), It's not good for the in-

Filipino parol all aglow at US Embassy

By TJ Burgonio

IT SHOULD sizzling by the US Embassy in Manila as night has become a revelation.

Multi-colored parol (lanterns) hanging outside the embassy compound front-lag Roxas Boulevard now provide a burst of cheer to the otherwise dimly lit, secluded portion of the busy thoroughfare by Manila Bay.

The long row of Christmas lanterns made of capiz shells and various intricate designs was officially lighted at around 6 p.m. on Friday, greeting a motley crowd of Manila residents and American expatriates, including parents of nearby evacuees.

"They're beautiful. We don't have them back home. It's very pretty to see everything lit up," gushed embassy employee Susan Ong, 36, who came out with her husband Greg and daughter Eva.

THE ENDURING symbol of a Philippine Christmas, the "parol," 41 in all, star-studded with the country's best for RP-US relations adorns the US Embassy on Roxas Boulevard for the first time. Just never touch it or jab.

'TWAS Ople's idea, says US envoy Francis Ricciardone (with the family of an embassy staffer), as light up the embassy Filipino style.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2007
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Air strike kills 10 suspected rebs

By Edwin O. Fernandez and Charlie C. Inocian
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—At least 10 suspected Islamic extremists were killed in a military air strike on their alleged hideouts in the Liguasan Marsh in Maguindanao on Friday, the military said yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Raul Relano, commander of the Army's 601 Infantry Division, said in Basic Intel MG-528 helicopters and two OV-10 bombers launched "preemptive" strikes at 2 p.m. on two houses where at least 50 Abu Sayyaf members and two Jemaah Islamiyah operatives were reportedly meeting.

Relano said that as many as 18 bodies were seen floating in the marsh waters after the attack but it could not be ascertained if they were Abu Sayyaf or Jemaah Islamiyah members.

"They suffered a big blow in this operation. I am waiting for reports about the fate of the two suspected JIs in the area. The two houses were blown up and our operatives at the ground confirmed at least 10 dead," he said.

But the claim was denied by a spokesperson of the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front, who charged that the attack hit MILF members in violation of a ceasefire agreement with the government.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said the attacks hit a gathering of MILF fighters and that no Abu Sayyaf or Jemaah Islamiyah members were at the site during the air strike. One MILF fighter was wounded in the attack, he added.

Kabalu said the incident had been reported to a joint ceasefire monitoring committee.

However, he said the attack would not affect plans to resume formal peace talks brokered by Malaysia. Formal negotiations are expected to resume within the year in Kuala Lumpur.

A team of peace monitors led by a Bangsamoro general joined the ceasefire panels from the government and the MILF inspecting the areas hit by the air strikes on Saturday and Sunday on the condition of displaced residents.

"The air strikes were not directed against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front," Relano said in a radio interview.

"The attack was a simple police action to neutralize the Abu Sayyaf and kidnap-for-ransom gangs in the area."

Two Huey helicopters cited to land troops in the area but could not touch down due to the deep water, Relano said, after the Interval the military to resort to air strikes due to the difficulty of entering the marsh by foot.

Relano said the Abu Sayyaf gunmen fought back and hit a Huey helicopter which sustained minor damages.

No soldier was injured during the raid.

Relano said the bombing operation was closely coordinated with the MILF but this was denied by Kabalu.

"Our MILF base commander in the area, Ameril Umbra, has confirmed that there was no prior coordination," Kabalu said.

The army informed the MILF of the attack just as the bomb runs started flying, he said.

Military spokesperson Lt. Col. Bienvenido Patrimil said the air strike was prompted by reliable military intelligence reports that Abu Sayyaf chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani and brother Hapilon were meeting in the area with suspected Jemaah Islamiyah members led by Mike Indanan Janjalani and Hapilon have been sighted in Central Mindanao since July.

"They were there certainly to plan a terror activity since the military's dominion in Jolo made it progressive for them," Relano said.

He said no civilian community was affected by the air strike.

But reports resulting here said that the air strikes forced hundreds of people to flee the villages on the boundaries of South Upi municipality and Shiu Piang town which are near the Liguasan marsh.

Social-welfare officials said they were gathering more information about the reported evacuations.

Government sources say that the MILF may be harboring Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah members have been a thorny issue in attempts to make peace with the MILF, which has been fighting for Muslim self-rule for more than three decades. With AFP stories, AP reports

MEMBERS of the 1st Marine Battalion Landing Team 1 troop for lunch on their arrival at Philippine Navy headquarters on Roxas Blvd., Pasay City, yesterday. After seven years of combat duty in Mindanao, MBLT1 returned home for retraining and refurbishing for the next six months at Fort Bonifacio. The Marines received a homecoming. AP PHOTO/PUNONGBAYAN

AFP: Bounty hunters join hunt for Janjalani

By Alcuin Papa

BOUNTY hunters have joined the hunt for the shadowy Abu Sayyaf leader Khaddafy Janjalani in a bid to collect the $5-million reward offered by the United States for his capture, according to the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

This revealed explains why the bounty leader had become highly mobile, said Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza, Southern Command (Southcom) chief. He wants to choke off military troops and civilian hunters hunters who are scrounging him for the reward money, he added.

In a talk with reporters yesterday, Braganza said Janjalani had become very careful including with his men and even his relatives.

The bandit leader now allows someone close to him would reveal his whereabouts in exchange for the $5-million reward for his arrest or neutralization, he said.

"He is on the run. He have downgraded their (Janjalani's) level as well as fight," Braganza said.

Aside from the $5-million reward from US authorities, there is a P1.8-million price for information that would lead to Janjalani's capture.

Braganza said the military had just received information that Janjalani had returned to Basilan. The information could be an attempt to mislead the authorities, he said.

At the height of the joint RP/US Balikatan exercises in Basilan last year, Janjalani abandoned his jungle lair down and sought refuge in Central Mindanao.

Last month, intelligence reports said Janjalani had moved back to Basilan and ahead of the scheduled arrival in Central Mindanao by the joint peace panels of the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Was it the chauffeur or the papaitan?

We've never figured it out really, what we last saw in her at the mall, but we're thankful anyway.

Mrs. Gwen Rocas had always been accompanied by her husband to the bank. He'd open the door for her, usher through, explain what the forms were for, tell her where to sign. And she'd always be listening cheerfully, her jaw floating in compliance. She was glad, we guessed, to have someone seeing out all the formalities and penalties for her.

But the day came when Mr. Rocas, quite regrettably, passed away. And our account with her as he appeared dissolved to follow in his footsteps as well.

Until we remembered that the bathroom at all our years with us, come to the bank by herself. It was always an adventure she embarked upon with her husband. And something we couldn't even put her to do alone.

So we arranged for a driver to pick her up at her home and bring her over. Strolling on leisurely, she swayed into the bank. And just as soon leisurely, we escorted into the tube Amy reserved for her husband.

Smile by smile, we navigated the course of her concessions with her. And told her that if she wanted, we could keep on doing the same thing for her every time she needed to visit the bank. Her smile was all the yes we needed.

We took her to lunch, too, that day. To a place that, to our knowledge, served the best papaitan in Manila (we had learned on her that it was strangely enough, her favorite dish). She talked about how she was coping with the loss of her husband, about how the house seemed too big now, about how helpful people had been to her. And how the papaitan left a tenderness short of the heavy.

She had the driver bring her back home and we heard nothing from Mrs. Rocas for the next two weeks. And then she called, asking to be picked up. She had some deposits to make, she said. And a newly opened pot full of what was truly, as we discovered, the best papaitan in Manila.

If life doesn't sound like the kind of relationship you have with your bank, you may want to give us a try.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday SPORTS
Text or post feedback
Editor Teotoyki S. Melendres

Gin Kings try to extend win run

THE BARANGAY Ginebra Gin Kings don't mind playing consecutive games with little time to rest as long as they are winning.

After squeezing past the Purefoods T-Bird-ings Friday night, the Gin Kings will make their wins smash score, this time against the Alaska Aces in the Great Bleacher Phlx Philippine Cup tonight at the Cuneta Astrodome.

A victory over the Aces will not only pull the Gin Kings (7-3) closer to the league-leading Talk N Text Phone Pals (8-1), they are also bound to earn the distinction of keeping the longest winning run in the conference so far games.

"We don't look far ahead and take one game at a time. We're glad to be in this position. But we don't dwell too much on it, we only focus on what's in front of us," said Barangay Ginebra coach Siot Tanquingcen.

Ranged against the Aces (4-7), the Gin Kings enjoy superior frontline strength with Rasual Addurad, Eric Menk, Andy Seigle and James Wellbrock around. The odds are just about even in the backcourt.

Mike Cortez remains a doubtful starter but Brandon Cobbig, Jeffrey Cariaso and Bong Hawkins will be there to match the Gin Kings' backcourt trio of Marc Cagulioa, Jaypee Belvenhood and Rodney Santos.

"Both [Aaron] have been down but it's just a matter of time before they pick up. They still have too many options with the triangle and it's a tall order to beat them," said Tanquingcen.

Hall is breathing down Barangay Ginebra's neck at solo third, something the Tanduay guys want to retain when they clash with the Coca-Cola Tigers in the other game.

The Turbochargers (6-4) and the Tigers (5-5) cut a three-game slide by defeating the Welly's Express and the short-handed Red Bull Barako, respectively, on the same night.

"Your setbacks weren't surprising. It takes time for the team to get back its rhythm after acquiring Ali [Peek] and John [Arigo]. It was the same thing that happened to us before we won a championship two years ago," said Coca-Cola coach Chot Reyes.

Reyes explained the Tigers are experiencing a "J-curve," a phenomenon marked by an immediate plunge after which a team is expected to recover again. After stopping a three-game meltdown, Reyes said the Tigers are now on the path to recovery.

"I hope this part of the J-curve would be long enough to carry us through the elimination round," said Reyes.

WHAT'S INSIDE

HACIENDA LUISITA IMBROGLIO

Noynoy: Will of majority should prevail

By Yvi Contreras
and Jerome Aning

TARLAC Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III yesterday said he would accept the setup—one of the stock distribution option (SDO)—at Hacienda Luisita Inc. if the would be the majority decision of the workers there.

"I will have to side with the majority of what they want... They can vote to dissolve the corporation," Aquino said in reporters in Quezon City for sale.

The controversial SDO scheme basically workers stockholders (other than actual landholders) to the Tarlac farming complex owned by the Cojuangco-Aquino clan, it was one of the issues raised by the striking workers.

But the lawmaker, only son of former President Corazon Aquino and namesake of the martyred opposition leader, said that should a vote be held, the will of the majority of the workers, and "not of the noisy few who claim to be the majority," should prevail.

It was an apparent reference to the militant groups who had opposed the SDO as alleged form of land reform and who had been supporting the striking workers.

Aquino nevertheless expressed doubt that the current deadlock in collective bargaining negotiations between the hacienda management and the labor union would reach such a stage.

Opportunities

He said Luisita workers had had "opportunities" to push the SDO—twice in 1989 and once in 1998—but that they still voted overwhelmingly for its retention.

In another front, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said the Department of Labor and Employment would continue efforts to assist the management and workers of Luisita's Central Azucarera de Tarlac settle their dispute.

Representatives of the contending parties met last Friday and agreed to talk again on Thursday preparatory to the resumption of negotiations on the stalled CBA.

Blurred

Sto. Tomas, who has been blamed by some sectors for indirectly causing the violence dispersal of the striking workers and their sympathizers last Tuesday, also called for activity while the issues were being settled.

"Things have happened. What we should do is allow the investigation to take its course and come up with a firm resolve to avoid the recurrence of this very unfortunate incident," she said.

The violence dispersal resulted in the death of 14 persons, including two children, and injuries to some 300 others.

Maintain peace

Sto. Tomas reiterated that her earlier decision to ask for an augmentation force from the military's Northern Luzon Command was merely meant to maintain peace and order at Luisita.

She said her request for the help of police and military personnel had legal basis because Article 263 (g) of the Labor Code allowed her to "settle the existence of any labor dispute causing or likely to cause imminent grave danger to national health or safety including lockouts or strikes in industries indispensable to the national interest."

But she said she would not declare martial law in Tarlac province, as some quarters had feared.

She said her response for the help of police and military personnel had legal basis because Article 263 (g) of the Labor Code allowed her to "settle the existence of any labor dispute causing or likely to cause imminent grave danger to national health or safety including lockouts or strikes in industries indispensable to the national interest."

But she said she would not declare martial law in Tarlac province, as some quarters had feared.

The Daily Gospel

Sunday, November 21, 2004
Christ the King

1st Reading: 2 S 5:1-3

All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "We are your bone and flesh. In the past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led Israel out to battle and back. And the LORD said to you, 'You shall be the shepherd of my people Israel and you shall be commander over Israel.' " So the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made an agreement with the elders of Israel at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed him king of Israel.

2nd Reading: Col 1:12-20

Constantly give thanks to the Father who has empowered us to receive our share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. He rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in him we are redeemed and forgiven.

Christ is the beginning and everything
He is the image of the unseen God,
and for all creation he is the firstborn.
for in him all things were created,
in heaven and on earth,
visible and invisible,
thrones, rulers, authorities, powers...
All was made through him and for him.
He is before all
and all things hold together in him.

And he is the head of the body, that is the Church,
he is the first, the first raised from the dead
(for he was to be the first in everything,
for God was pleased to let fullness dwell in him
Through him God willed to reconcile all things to himself,
and through him, through his blood shed on the cross,
God established peace,
on earth as in heaven.

Gospel: Lk 23:35-43

The people stood by watching, as for the rulers, they jeered at him, saying to one another, "Let the man who saved others now save himself, if he is the Messiah, the chosen one of God!"

The soldiers also mocked him and when they drew near to offer him bitter wine, they said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!" Indeed, there was an inscription written above, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals hanging with Jesus insulted him, "So you are the Messiah? Save yourself and us as well!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Have you no fear of God, you who are under the same sentence as he dies? For us it is just. This is payment for what we have done, but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replied, "Truly, you will be with me today in paradise."

Commentary

The people tell us that "the kingdom of God is among you" (Lk 17:21). They also say that it is still to come. "May your kingdom come" (Matt 6:10).

The kingdom of God is already here in the sense that Jesus has ushered and sowing its seed. But we know also that its presence is obscured by the continued presence of evil in the world. Individuals and institutions can deny the power being aligned on the will of God, and so the kingdom is incomplete. In final kingdom Christ eventually founding over a perfect kingdom in God his Father (1Cor 15:24), but since this is not yet, we live, like Abraham of Israel in distant. Origen (herein 185-254) wrote the following, "Until you hand over your life to the Father, Christ's life is not fully handed over. Without you he cannot receive his full glory. Without your free to, without his people, who are his body and his bride."

The phrase "kingdom of heaven" comes from Matthew's gospel, the term give the impression that it is reference to another world. The other people say "kingdom of God." Matthew was writing specifically for Jews, and Jews did not like to use the name "God," out of respect. (In fact, to this day some Jewish writers in English will put dashes "G-d.") This should not suppose to us that it is some where other the clouds. Christ comes to be king here, set king of the clouds.

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Supreme Court Doctrines

LABOR LAW (THEORY AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT)—Attorney's fees cannot be deducted from separation benefits—Article 223 of the Labor Code provides for the proper separation benefits. The appellate court aptly ruled that petitioners had not complied with this statutory requirement. They deducted the amount of attorney's fees that had allegedly accrued as a result of the renegotiation for a new collective bargaining agreement. Without denying that they deducted these fees, petitioners argue that the deductions were made with the prior approval of respondents. This contention is untenable. The Labor Code prohibits such arrangements in this wise: "Article 222. Agreements and fees.—(b) No attorney's fees, negotiation fees or similar charges of any kind arising from any collective bargaining negotiations or maintenance of the collective bargaining agreement shall be imposed on any individual member of the contracting union: Provided, however, That attorney's fees may be charged against union funds in an amount to be agreed upon by the parties, any contract, agreement or arrangement of any sort to the contrary shall be null and void." The obligation to pay attorney's fees belongs to the union and cannot be thrusted to the individual workers as their direct responsibility. The law has made clear that any agreement to the contrary shall be null and void ab initio. Thus, petitioners' deduction of attorney's fees from respondents' separation pay has no basis in law. [Citations omitted.] (Justice Panganiban, First Division, Rizal Plywood Corp. vs. Medina, G. R. No. 148032, April 14, 2004)

(c) R. R. Vera

Ombudsman needs more money

By Armando M. Macjet

THE OMBUDSMAN has admitted that despite the filing of graft cases against some government officials recently, cracking the proverbial "big fish" would remain an elusive dream if the government did not spend more in the anti-graft campaign.

In a summary of its 2005 budget proposal submitted to Congress, the Ombudsman's office asked Congress to give it a bigger budget of P890,750 million next year to ensure that those charged with graft were convicted.

Its budget for 2005 and 2006 were the same—P480 million per year—after the 2005 national budget was reviewed the following year.

"Without sufficient manpower for the proper and reasonable [investigation] and prosecution [of graft cases], the weight of the increase in the conviction rate and the elusive objective of finally catching the proverbial big fish would be facilitated," said the summary prepared by the staff of Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo.

The Ombudsman lamented that it now had only 37 special prosecutors handling 1,000 cases in the Sandiganbayan antigraft court.

Lawyers in the Ombudsman's Office of the Special Prosecutor, headed by Chief Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, represent the government in the Sandiganbayan against public officials charged with graft.

Most of these officials have money and can afford the best lawyers.

They include former First Lady Imelda Marcos, ousted President Joseph Estrada and his son Jinggoy Estrada, Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia, former Ambassador Edgardo "Dindong" Espiritu, former Ambassador and Cabinet member Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez, Lt. Gen. Edgardo Aprilano Jr., former Senior Secretary Brig. Rodolfo P. Tor and Public Works Secretary Florante Soriquez.

With a bigger budget, the Ombudsman said it hoped to hire 44 more prosecutors, 11 field investigator lawyers and 147 investigator field investigators. This would cost the government P61.7 million.

The Ombudsman lamented that even as it had asked for a P890.7 million budget, the Department of Budget and Management has reduced this to P535.611 million.

OPPOSITION MEET

The United Opposition (UNO) met recently at Club Filipino, San Juan, to discuss organizational matters and plans toward alternative governance. The meeting was presided over by UNO chair Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay and was attended by (from left, I to r row) Marivela Cruz, Rep. Ito Antonino, Rep. Oscar Malapitan, Rep. Eladino Quinsaton Caindoy, Binay, Marcelo Morales, Tessie Aquino-Oreta and Greg Honasan; (2nd row, from left) Councilor Jun-jun Binay, Mayor Jose Garcia, Rep. Roy Loyola, Rep. Benny Angara, Mayor Eddy Tiangco, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, House Minority Leader Cito Punzalan, Richard Gomez, Mayor JV Ejercito and Rep. Singhung Crisologo

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'Unding' kills 5; still hovers over RP

TROPICAL storm "Unding" (international name: Muifa) continued to ravage the country yesterday after leaving five people dead, forcing the evacuation of more than 5,000 others and destroying 900 houses, authorities said.

The storm toppled trees and telephone lines as it sliced through the Bicol region with sustained winds of 120 kph and gusts of up to 150 kph, the weather bureau said.

Unding, which originated as a tropical depression last Sunday, lingered over the sea close to Catanduanes for nearly five days before gaining strength and blowing westward into Bicol, said weather forecaster Alma Perante.

The storm was some 140 km southeast of Manila at 4 a.m. yesterday, heading west for the island of Marinduque. A weakened slightly, moving west at 19 kph and was spotted over Mindoro island, about 200 km south of Manila, at midday yesterday. It was forecast to be near the Cuyos Islands today, the weather bureau said.

Flights to the island of Marinduque were cancelled.

The Office of Civil Defense said 20 people were reported missing when five motorized outriggers capsized in stormy seas off Pasacao, a town in Camarines Sur province.

The Coast Guard said a ferry headed for Manila from Cebu City rammed four of 10 cargo containers of a tugboat and a barge in Albay province.

Some 5,000 residents in Albay province, Camarines Sur and Catanduanes were evacuated to safer ground, said Albay Governor Joey Salceda.

Classes were suspended in the three provinces, and the Philippine Coast Guard said it had stopped all sea travel in the area.

Unding forced the evacuation of more than 3,200 people from their homes on the eastern coast of the Bicol peninsula, knocking out power to parts of the area. It also caused landslides that stuck several roads in Catanduanes impassable.

About 300 homes were totally destroyed in four provinces, with more than 1,000 suffering some damage, said Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Nafarrete, head of the disaster response unit at the Office of Civil Defense

Garcia said to be 'shopping' for bigger room

By Fe Zamora

MAJ. GEN. Carlos F. Garcia spent his first day in detention allegedly "shopping" for a room bigger and more comfortable than the one originally prepared for him in Camp Aguinaldo, Inquirer sources in the military said yesterday.

Garcia reportedly spent his first night in detention in an air-conditioned function room in one of the offices of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP), according to the same sources.

Acting ISAFP chief Col. Gloria Quevedo, however, maintained that the former military comptroller was not accorded any special treatment and was detained in the non-airconditioned maximum-security center.

"Hahabalong pa sabagal Ito's in a military mill, I assure you," Quevedo said in a text message to the Inquirer.

On Friday morning, Garcia, who is facing charges for his unexplained wealth estimated at P340 million, was taken to the ISAFP compound where he would be detained along with leaders of the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny.

At around 5 p.m. of the same day Garcia, escorted by a lieutenant colonel, was seen reportedly "inspecting" rows of apartment-like barracks for officers which had been converted into quarters for political prisoners and detainees under the witness-protection program.

An eyewitness said that after inspecting the rooms, Garcia was brought to the office near the ISAFP encripod, and left to the maximum detention center which is located in the back of ISAFP.

"We spent the night there because there were security people outside the office," the source said.

"Garcia is still a general, good or bad," an ISAFP official said in response to an Inquirer query on where the former military comptroller was being detained.

Yesterday afternoon, a lawyer of Garcia arrived at the ISAFP and proceeded to the office near the encripod, not to the maximum-detention cell which could be reached only by passing through at least four guarded gates.

An Inquirer reader of ISAFP said that detainees were not allowed to receive visitors until after a month in detention. But lawyers, according to the source, are given free access.

Garcia was supposed to arraign the court once resolved by Emilio Andaya, alias Commander Rebol, the Abu Sayyaf leader who was captured in Jolo on 9/11st year.

Meanwhile, the National Commission on Culture and the Arts has launched a play-writing competition with a very specific, albeit disturbing theme: Fighting corruption in Philippine society.

"We're looking for plays that can truly reflect the issues that we wish to resolve," NCCA Executive Director Cecile Guidote Alvarez told the Inquirer yesterday.

With Bob Gonzales

Yanks helped draw up AFP plan

FORT BIG, PALAWAN, Wednesday EDT—The United States helped the Armed Forces of the Philippines draft a reform plan aimed at curbing corruption in the military and will partly fund its implementation, according to Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr.

Cruz, who introduced the Philippine defense reform program to the Philippine Military Academy here yesterday said the 10-point plan sought to direct the military to invest in field training programs for soldiers and officers, reorganize its purchasing and auditing systems, and revamp the recruitment and promotion of officers.

Calling attention to the scandal involving former Armed Forces comptroller Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia, Cruz told PMA cadets the plan included "institutional, structural and systemic reforms that would deprive some the opportunity to commit graft and corruption within our ranks."

"No matter how many times we catch thieves in our ranks, no matter how many times we prosecute them and send them to jail—water, graft and corruption will persist unless we put locks on our doors," Cruz told the cadets.

He said the reform plan was derived from a three-year Armed Forces logistics and operational assessment conducted by the Philippine military and the United States Pacific Command.

The plan was concluded in 2000 but was being implemented only this year, he said. "I gained inspiration when President Macapagal-Arroyo had a state visit to the US and the latter [US President George W.] Bush as help in complete this assessment."

He said American experts noted how the Philippine military lacked operational direction and was functioning in a manner that was "systemically weak." Please see Gobrun, PM Northern Luzon Bureau

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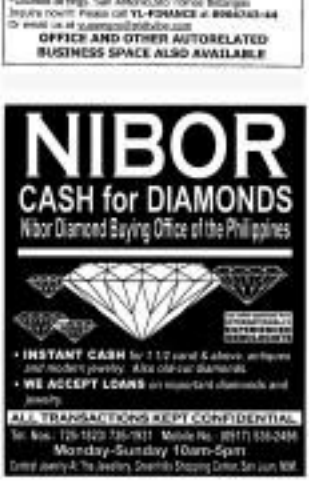

ILOCOS WINDMILLS AT CENTER OF CASE?

Newsman's kin fear killing will never be solved

(Last of two parts)

By Jerry E. Esplanada

MADRID: Fear that the murderers of crusading Luzon radio commentator Roger Mariano might escape justice, his family has rallied on President Macapagal-Arroyo for help in tracking down his killers.

Members of the family, who live in Dingras town near Laoag City, fear for their lives.

"We're worried the killing of Roger will never be solved," his widow Alma told this reporter.

Mariano's threat to expose supposed irregularities in connection with a lease to Brazos the building of a 69-kV power transmission line from Pasuquin to Laoag City is among the angles police said they are looking into in their investigation of the July 11 murder.

The transmission line is a major component of the 24.7 megawatt wind-turbine power plant in Ilocos Norte expected to be operational by February.

First of its kind

The project being built in Bangui (seen by Manila Mayor Lito Atienza) is the country's first commercial wind power plant, next to the first of its kind in Southeast Asia, said to be the largest of a project among industrial countries.

According to Montalbad chair Bienvenido Dumlao, the plant is a brainchild of Ilocos Norte Governor Imelda "Imeldong" Marcos Ar-

"Prior to the Marcos family's exile to Hawaii in 1986, the Dingras family closely commissioned then Energy Secretary Geronimo Velasco to look into the possibility of an environment-conscious project like this. Finally, in 2000, he said, 'Let's proceed with the wind project,'" recalled Dumlao.

The project is also part of the Philippine Energy Plan of the energy department.

Construction of the transmission line is to be financed by a loan from the Development Bank of the Philippines to be secured by the Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative (INEC).

No Marcos money involved

Officials of Bacnotan and INEC strongly denied allegations of irregularities in the transaction backed by a probe team formed by the National Press Club to look into Mariano's death.

Dumlao, a special projects consultant of the Ilocos Norte provincial government, also told the Inquirer that, contrary to the claims of Montalbad's critics, "not a single cent of Governor Marcos' personal money is involved in the wind power plant project."

Dumlao quoted the governor as saying that "that would do more harm than good."

"Long before the project started, the governor told me, 'Magkagastos pa ako mula sa aking bulsa (I may spend from my pocket for the project).' I told her, 'Governor, as much as no concern is it, that project would be dead,'"

MARIANO

INEC has cost 130,000 consumers. Last year, it was named by the National Electrification Administration as the country's most outstanding electric cooperative.

A copy of the NPC report was made available to the Inquirer by Bernard Bengzon, associate publisher of the local paper Gazette Philippines and a former INEC director.

Bengzon, in a text message to the Inquirer, viewed Dumlao's claim that he had an ax to grind because his opposed requests for advertisements had been unfulfilled. Bengzon said neither he nor his paper "ever solicited support or advertisement" from the Bacnotan bunch.

Letter to GMA

In Dingras, INEC power users include Mariano's family. His daughter, Brenda, is a community employee of the cooperative.

Where interested, Brenda and her mother showed no interest in the controversies dogging the electric cooperative.

The Mariano family had asked the Inquirer to broadcast to Malacañang their letter to Ms Arroyo requesting for the deployment of "better [police] trained graves to help the authorities solve the case of my father."

"The authorities concerned in our province, specifically the Criminal Intelligence and Investigation Group (CIDG), is carrying all efforts in solving this case," said the Oct. 29 letter signed by Alma. "However, we observed that, up to now, they have not come up with conclusive solution to the case."

The family handed the letter over to the Inquirer before the Ilocos Norte police investigating Mariano's slaying announced they had filed murder charges against police investigators of their 6/Col Apolonio Mendoza, after allegedly heads a group of blood guns in the province.

Suspected triggerman

Last Thursday the suspected triggerman surrendered to the police, saying he had received death threats.

Basilio Tadeo, a resident of Bimal, Ilocos Sur, was taken to the police's Camp Valentin Juan after hours of negotiations with the police. Like Medroso, he is facing murder charges in connection with Mariano's death.

"He sent letters that he wanted to have taken under police custody because he feared for his life," said Dr. Supt. Juan Lotus Jr., Ilocos Norte police director.

The police are looking for two other suspects.

Medroso, formerly assigned to the Ilocos Norte police office, was supposedly Mariano's drinking buddy. He also reportedly supervised the mini-breakwater in his block-time program by providing him with adobe armorers.

Unsolved murders

Mariano's colleagues, including dxJC station manager Clemedes Lorenzo, have organized concerts that the number might just add to the growing list of unsolved murders in the Ilocos region.

The Philippine National Police has tasked Lorenzo to compile and produce tapes of Mariano's popular radio programs. "Roger liked to listen to tickets," believing that might help them piece together information that could lead to the solution of the crime.

Last month, Governor Marcos told local media that the authorities had a "good idea" who might be interested in killing Mariano.

"But, to bring it to court, we still have to find evidence. Ilang saksing nyo (any) mga indirect guide, para sa family alam na nila kung sino [for JJ you ask the investigators, as far as they are concerned, they know who did it]."

"There are many anonymous letters. We are investigating that, but, again, the difficult thing here is those were anonymous tips," Marcos said. "When they are investigated, they lead to a dead end. But we are trying to identify who did this, who gave him the order."

A week earlier, Marcos told reporters that "there certainly is a very alarming rise in the level of incidents." He also noted a "pattern" to the killings.

"[They] seemed to have been done by professionals, and those characters are still known to us. So we are trying to see if we can connect the crimes to those people without too much," he added.

Laoag City Mayor Michael Fariñas told the Inquirer he was "hoping for the best so far in the Roger Mariano case is concerned, but I'm not really that optimistic."

A PI mobilization warned that two persons by the Baptismal Ng Mga Kindlanden sa Pilipinas (national chapter) for the solution of the murder. The reward came from a fund allocated by Ms Arroyo for victims of violence against media practitioners. (With a report from Cristina Arnaldo, PID Northern Luzon Bureau)

ILOCOS Norte Rep. Roque Abloc Jr. pores over photos at the scene of his "old friend," Laoag radio commentator Roger Mariano, who was killed while riding in a motorcycle here on July. Mariano was the 53rd journalist killed in the country since 1986. The murder has since been erased by 59.

Cost of power

The NPC probe team, in its unsigned report on the results of its inquiry into Mariano's killing, said that one of the slain broadcaster's criticisms of the project was that "the energy from the wind mill project would be sold to NPC at a cost much higher than other INEC member consumers are currently paying."

In effect, the INEC base would supposedly be passed on to consumers in the form of additional power costs.

Both Bacnotan and INEC president Lorenzo Sun dismissed the allegations in the NPC report.

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Inquirer

ATI MEMORIAL HALL, Philippine Army Camp

High court orders retrial of man who changed plea

By Philip C. Tubeza

A QUEZONAWE's guilty plea in court does not necessarily mean that he is really guilty.

This is what the Supreme Court said as it ordered the retrial of a man sentenced to death for allegedly robbing and killing a nanny-changer in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, in October 1998.

In a 28-page ruling issued on Nov. 12, the high court said that the trial of Reynaldo C. Dalacat after it found out that the Vigan Regional Trial Court had sentenced him to death without conducting a "searching inquiry" into the voluntariness of his guilty plea and his "full comprehension" of its consequences.

The court also castigated Dalacat's three successive lawyers for sloppy work and for failing to uphold their client's rights when he changed his not guilty plea to guilty.

"The trial court's not only failed to probe the spontaneity of [Dalacat's] plea, it made several key to appreciation of the import of his change of plea on the accused but who was merely told that he could face the penalty of reclusion perpetua to death," said the decision penned by Associate Justice Rhenta Claire Ynares-Santiago.

It were morning that the accused threw the opposite penalty of death a significant, but more often than not, an accused pleads guilty upon bad advice or because he hopes for a lighter sentence or a lighter penalty," it added.

Dalacat and four others were charged with robbery in band with homicide for the killing of Hipolita Bagay and the theft of P1.2 million from his nursery-hanger shop in Vigan on Oct. 14, 1998.

The court noted that Dalacat had tried to escape from prison because of the insufficient legal advice was getting before he changed his plea.

"Given the dearth of advocates willing to take up the cudgels for him, it was no surprise that appellant soon took matters into his hands as he attempted, but failed, to escape from captivity," the court said.

"And when this stark act of desperation manifested, appellant, ostensibly defeated, admitted authorship of the crime charged, oblivious of the fact that such admission would cost him his life," it added.

The high court said Dalacat's case was "rather exceptional" because near lack the defense and the government warned it warranted due to his "improvident" guilty plea.

The high tribunal said the trial court erred in sentencing Dalacat to death since it had failed to require the prosecution to present additional evidence to prove his guilt after his admission and to ask him if he wanted to present evidence in his behalf.

Quoting Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr.'s ruling in another case, the court stressed that a plea of guilty was "only a supporting evidence of the accused's own belief of his culpability, the main proof being the evidence presented by the prosecution to prove the accused's guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

"The court cannot, and should not, relieve the prosecution of its duty to prove the guilt of the accused and the precise degree of his culpability by the requisite quantum of evidence," the court said.

CA blocks pyramid funds' release

THE COURT of Appeals has blocked the release of P46 million in bank deposits owned by alleged pyramid scam queen Rosario Bulaclac.

In a four-page resolution issued on Nov. 17, the court's 16th division issued a 60-day temporary restraining order (TRO) on the P46,123,20.35 (amount) P46 million) deposited in the R.A.B. Bulaclac accounts at the Chinese-am Commercial Bank Corp.

R.A.B. Realty is part of the Multilevel group of companies that Bulaclac and her husband Santiago operated.

"By hereby order that [Chinatrust] be restrained from encashing or honoring US dollar draft 3370 in the amount of $$1,326,04 ," said the resolution penned by Justice Jose Sitmuangan.

The third Money Laundering Council and couple Gil and Cecilia Vicente had asked the tribunal to freeze the funds after Manila Judge Jaime Salvosa Jr. earlier this month ordered their release pending the case's hearing and lets group of claimants against Bulaclac.

Salvosa, Chinatrust and Bulaclac's group were also ordered to comment on the petition to freeze the assets.

The AMLC, through Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo, had asked the court to reverse Salvosa's ruling in April that allowed Bulaclac's group to collect up to P46 million from the Bulaclacs' bank assets.

Philip C. Tubeza

2 RP spas cited among Asia-Pacific region's best

Best Retreat

By Jaromie Aning

TWO OF the country's leading spas logged four awards in the first-ever Spa Asia Crystal Awards held early this month in Singapore, the Department of Tourism said yesterday.

The Spas at San Benito in Lipa, Batangas, collected three awards: Best Retreat, Best Holistic Healing Programs and New Spa Arriving. The Manduyu Spa on Boracay island near for The Best Representation Program.

The two spas received a total of 38 nominations in the country's 47 categories.

San Benito Resort's Best Retreat Award, considered the second highest honor, was topped only by the Best Destination Spa Award, won by Indonesia's The Ritz-Carlton Bali Resort & Spa.

Tourism Secretary Joseph "Joe" Durano said the efforts of the government and the private sector to position the Philippines as a major spa holiday destination in the Asia-Pacific region have finally paid off. "The awards garner the DOT's health and wellness program a big boost," he said.

Durano expressed hope the international recognition bestowed on San Benito Farm and Manduyu Spa would inspire the rest of the industry to work harder for greater professionalism and higher standards of service and facilities.

The farm at San Benito, a former coffee and coconut plantation at the foothills of Mt. Malarayat, is two hours away from the Ninoy Aquino International airport. Manduyu Spa is a 30-minute plane ride from Manila to Caticlan and a 20-minute boat ride to the world-renowned Boracay island.

The award-winning spas were the founding members of the Spa Association of the Philippines, an organization of DOT-accredited firms and individuals either directly or indirectly engaged in the spa business.

The department spearheaded the organization of accredited spas into a formal association early this year to boost the competitive standing of Philippine health and medical tourism in Asia.

The SPA Asia Crystal Awards was organized by Spa Asia Media Pte Ltd, publisher of Spa Asia magazine which has a readership of around 40,000 all over the Asia-Pacific region. Its aim is "to create a defining measure of gold standards that spas can achieve."

Early this year, Spa Asia magazine asked its readers to nominate their favorite spas in 47 categories. The publication and chat-by-asking the best in the industry, "we hope to continue to inspire and act as the definitive guide to spas-ing in Asia."

Elderly Fil-Am charged with abusing girl, 5

THE BUREAU of Immigration yesterday said it had arrested a 68-year-old Filipino-American accused of molesting a 5-year-old girl in Mansfield, Pampanga.

Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said suspect George Smilton Brown was collared by the fil agents at his residence in Mansfield on Thursday, after the girl's parents filed a complaint accusing him of sexually molesting their daughter last June.

Fernandez said Brown was an illegal alien; his holdupport membership expired six years ago.

Brown is detained at the fil jail in Taguig City pending the resolution of his case. If found guilty, he would deported after serving his sentence.

The victim claimed Brown molested her after she and three playmates asked for marijuana from his backyard orchard. She said the suspect invited her into his house, removed her underwear and molested her.

The victim's parents submitted the results of a medico-legal examination on their daughter which confirmed that she experienced vaginal discharge and contracted gonorrhea after the incident.

In another case, an 18-year-old American Peace Corps worker found guilty of engaging in conversation of sexual nature after he was arrested on his way to the Philippines to sleep with two pre-teen girls.

Wheelchair-bound widower and grandfather John Dolan is thrilled pennies his conviction of abusing the 2003 Western Bay Area Project (Cebu) are sunrpis irrespective of where the crime took place.

After a one week marjuny trial, US District Judge Allemarie Stotler found Dolan guilty on six counts out of seven. He faces a minimum of 10 years and up to 180 years behind bars when he is sentenced on March 7.

"Sex tourism is a growing problem and the United States is trying to prosecute these types of crimes pervasive, international sex tourists," US federal prosecutor Rich Lee told reporters.

Jaromie Aning, with an AFP report

AN ARMY of stone-throwers prepares to battle riot police as they get hosed down during the street clashes in the Chilean capital of Santiago.

ANTI-RIOT police bodily drag a protester through the chaotic scene.

THE PRESENCE of US President George W. Bush at the Apec summit is one of the main causes of dissent for demonstrators who burn the American flag.

GMA at Apec; no 1-on-1 meeting with Bush

From page A1

pound to Bush, the war in Iraq had unforeseen capitalism punched through Santiago just before the American president arrived for the weekend summit of 21 Pacific Rim nations.

As the police-authorized march through the city culminated in a concert in a central park, masked protesters destroyed cellphone booths, smashed luxury and lobbed stones at police and the windows of a closed McDonald's eatery.

Six automobiles, two policemen and an unknown number of demonstrators were hurt.

Chilean anti-riot police fired water cannons and tear gas at the protesters clustered in the adjacent, uptown Alameda boulevard.

Bush and other leaders will discuss trade, security, fighting corruption, stronger economic ties...and teamwork with one another—at the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

Apec's 21 members economies account for more than 2.5 billion people, a combined gross domestic product of $19 trillion and 47 percent of world trade.

Carnival atmosphere

It also represents the most economically dynamic region in the world, having generated nearly 70 percent of global economic growth in the first 50 years.

Only moments earlier, there had been a carnival-like atmosphere with families, children and young people rallying under light police supervision.

Security-clad women had danced to the samba alongside Brazilian-bearing drums, painted indigenous Mapuche people, two beauty queens—one a transvestite—and fantastic international activists with the Rainbow Coalition.

In an extraordinary clamp down, more than 5,000 military-style police joined the security operation. Officials declared a city-wide holiday prompting a long weekend exodus from Santiago.

Police also broke up an anarchist protest nearby in the nearby port city of Valparaiso, arresting 68, officials said.

Disgust directed at Bush

On Friday, thousands of Chileans marched through downtown Santiago in relative calm disgust over the Apec summit, believing it championed a kind of capitalism that widened the gap between rich and poor.

But most of their outrage was directed at Bush and the US-led war in Iraq.

An eight-made of plastic shacks, dragged plastic bottles behind it, the creation of the "Anti-coring Patriotic Theater Group" which said it represented the ego of imperialism turning every thing to garbage.

Marchers held up posters saying: "Bush, you stink," and "Terrorist Bush."

"We have to do something to humanize this economic model that is now spreading in the world," said Francisco Anaya, an office worker who brought his two children along. "I do not want that for my family."

While the Apec summit started out in 1989 as a gathering to focus on boosting trade among Pacific Rim nations, its focus has broadened in recent years to include security matters.

Bush hopes to use the Apec gathering to map strategy to contact talks early next year with North Korea over its nuclear ambitions. He may to hold one-on-one meetings Saturday with counterparts from China, Japan, South Korea and Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin told reporters he intended to tell Bush that Moscow supports convening an international conference to help Iraqis decide the future of their country.

Thrust on security

The world leaders will decide whether to endorse a counterplan issued by their trade and foreign ministers that expressed support for ongoing World Trade Organization talks.

Also proposed are new customs-security measures to protect food stocks and the development of a container-security prototype aimed at speeding up trade flights safety.

Apec's members include Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam.

Chevrolets for leaders

Organizers acutely followed an order of armorable-each Apec leader to enable the Chilean government to extend each of their full leisure.

Chile is located along the western coast of South America's Southern Cone, between the higher peaks of the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, with a population of 15.5 million people.

Mr. Arroyo and the other leaders were transported from the airport to their hotels by Chevrolet, the official vehicle supplier for the event.

GM delivered a total of 300 Chevrolet vehicles for the summit.

For the official Apec photograph, Mr. Arroyo and the other leaders will wear the "chamanto," Chile's traditional garment which is a decorative, reversible poncho (with a dark and light side,) woven in silk thread and wool.

Mr. Arroyo and the other leaders were billeted at the Santiago Marriott Hotel. With reports from Jerome Aning

Few Filipinos in Chile

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE SMALL Filipino community in Chile is estimated to number 75, of whom 26 are permanent migrants, 32 are temporary migrants, and about 12 are undocumented.

Almost 40 are engineers, managers, missionaries, farm workers and domestics.

Of 30 registered Filipino voters in Chile in the last May elections, only 10 voted as those who registered were mostly seafarers.

Filipino and Chilean share many historic, economic and cultural links.

Ferdinand Magellan passed near the southern tip of Chile—later named the Strait of Magellan—before he sailed on to the islands which he named Islas Filipinas in 1521.

During the Spanish rule in the Philippines, Chilean pesos were among the currencies used as legal tender alongside Mexican coins.

Like the Philippines, Chile inherited western political values and made Catholicism its state religion. Chile won independence from Spain in 1818, some 80 years before the Philippines did.

Seaweeds and brassieres

Philippine total trade with Chile for the past five years had been decreasing, except for the year 2003. Since 1999, the Philippines had a negative trade balance with Chile due to high importation of copper concentrates from that country.

The 10 top Philippine exports to Chile in 2003 included raw nuts and accessories, computers, vehicle engines, seaweeds and other algae, dessicated coconut, garments and brassieres.

PRESIDENT ARROYO arrives in Santiago on Saturday and is met by the Chile's Director General of Ceremonial and Protocol and Philippine Ambassador Consuelo Popoi Reyes.

Filipino parol all aglow at US Embassy

From page A1

me or view the lantern.

US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, who led the lighting ceremony together with Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, reckoned that the reason behind the decision to display the lanterns, all 63 of them, went beyond aesthetics. "They represent the 50 states of the Union and the 13 regions of the Philippines."

"This is a showcase of the friendship of the United States and the Philippines," said US Embassy spokesperson Karen Kelley.

Atienza added that the lantern display "proves that Manila and the US Embassy share the same traditions, same values and same historical heritages."

Opie started it

Undersecretary Susan Opie, daughter of the late Foreign Secretary Blas Opie (the Mamasa, the mayor's son, and some embassy officials joined Ricciardone and Atienza at the lighting ceremony.

Ricciardone said it was actually then Secretary Opie who started the idea of displaying Christmas lights and parol at the embassy.

He recalled a meeting with Opie late in 2002.

"We got together in his office on some weighty matter that I no longer can recall, but I do recall him making an official request to me. He asked me: 'Francis, your name is Italian. Aren't you of Italian origin?'

"And I said, 'I am, the Secretary,' He said: 'Don't the Italians celebrate Christmas?' I said: 'The Italians do, the Americans do, and my family does, and it's a great tradition, and I love it. Why you ask, Mr. Secretary?'

"Well, Francis," he said, 'I pass by your embassy every morning, and every morning I don't help but notice that there are no lights for Christmas at your embassy.'

"And so I came back and one thing led to another, and I asked the very capable management people to make sure we comply with the official request of one of the highest officials of the land...and we did."

Like friendship

Susan Opie thanked Ricciardone and Atienza for remembering her father with "kindness." Foreign Secretary Opie died early this year.

She added: "The friendship between the Philippines and the United States can never be scaled on temporary disagreements, but will flourish and grow just like the friendship between my father and the ambassador."

Ricciardone said he would celebrate Christmas in Manila this year, and would bring his family over for the holidays.

"This is my third Christmas in the Philippines, and there's no place I'd rather be than the Philippines. I'm bringing my family back again this year. We just love it here at Christmas time," he said.

Gordon: Revived mining industry would boost RP

By Michael Lim Ubac

SUBIC/OLONGAPO: Sen. Richard J. Gordon yesterday pushed for the revival of the country's moribund mining industry saying that about $1 trillion worth of "untried resources" remained buried in its mountains.

Gordon lamented that while the government could not pay its foreign debts and most Filipinos suffered, it is pursuing the Philippines in all of this had the second-largest gold and copper reserves.

Estimates put the total gold reserves in the country at 362.7 million metric tons, and its copper reserves at 4.85 million tons.

"With its rich deposits of metallic and nonmetallic minerals, such as marble and limestone, the Philippines ranked second in Asia in 1997 in terms of mining potential, Gordon said.

"Sadly, the Philippines is under-utilizing its vast mining resources. Our total mining output has been pegged at 1.9 percent of potential, thus the need to give this industry a shot in the arm," he said.

Gordon said he was studying a proposed measure backed by Mindanao which would resuscitate the mining sector after a January 2004 Supreme Court ruling limited foreign participation in the industry.

Gordon said tapping the Philippines' mineral wealth to uplift the lives of its citizens was not only essential but imperative if the country was to have a bright financial future.

He expressed the belief that the three-fifths of Philippine mining would come again, like the time it was able to extract 1.1 million tons of copper in 1998 and as much as 30,000 kilograms of gold each year from 1985 to 1997.

"If we utilize only a tenth of that, that is already the national debt—$130 billion. We need to use it so that we won't get a downgrade in our credit rating, or another 20 percent in our interest rates," Gordon said.

He said the revival of the industry should also focus on "social responsibility" for the environment and the indigenous peoples.

The Marcopper environmental tragedy should not dissuade the government from reviving the industry, Gordon said, noting that "Marcopper was more a damage (of) people suffering on the issue."

"It was a mistake of not doing due diligence. The government must try to exist (in) responsible mining. In terms of extracting mineral resources, there will always be damages. In every activity of man, there is damage and advantage, pain and consideration," he said.

What is important is the country "must have more advantages," especially during this crisis time," without impairing the environmental sustainability and destroying the way of life of the indigenous peoples, he said.

Otherwise, he said, the government, facing a dismal economic future, would be forced to continue increasing taxes and destroying families by sending Filipinos to work abroad.

He believed that a revived mining industry could generate employment in the countryside, so that Filipinos would fully benefit from the country's vast reserves of mineral resources.

Coupled with its mineral-rotting potential, Gordon emphasized the need for the Philippines to boost industries that would transform the mined minerals into finished products, like jewelry, copper tubes and the like.

Mikey backs GMA on NorthRail plan

By Carlos Pablo

THE LAWMAKER-SON of President Macapagal-Arroyo has come to the defense of one of her flagship projects, the 84.2-km. two-track NorthRail project.

Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo and members of the Central Luzon caucus in the House of Representatives said the infrastructure project had become "absolutely necessary."

"The NorthRail project is a major economic catalyst that will link business hubs and communities in Central and Northern Luzon, create employment, provide incomes to thousands of Filipinos and begin the long process of modernizing transport infrastructure," Arroyo said in a statement.

He was joined by Pampanga administration bigs Wilhelmino Sy-Alvarado and Dodot Bautista.

Arroyo issued the statement through the office of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. in the wake of allegations that the project was a "golden railway" that would cost P1 billion per kilometer of track.

The statement noted that according to the Philippine National Railways, each km. would cost only about P620 million.

NorthRail will connect Metro Manila from Caloocan City to Malolos in Bulacan.

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The WORLD

John Lucerne B. Gusco

US building case vs Iran, echoing pre-Iraq invasion

By Barry Schweid

WASHINGTON—The Bush administration is building a case against Iran with disclosures of a covert nuclear weapons program that carry echoes of the run-up to the war with Iraq.

Just as the campaign against Saddam Hussein did not always draw the support of all US allies and strained trans-Atlantic relations, the administration is at odds with many European countries.

While Britain, France and Germany are trying to work out an agreement in which Iran would terminate or dismantle its nuclear weapons system, the administration is skeptical, saying Iran in the past has broken promises to stop its uranium enrichment.

On Monday, Iran is to announce, by suspending enrichment, how the deal still must be sealed in a detailed way in another round of talks planned for Dec. 15 between the European Union nations and Iran.

Diplomatic overtures to Iran do not appear to be part of the US strategy, but Deputy Secretary of State Richard L. Armitage told the Arab world Friday, "We're talking about resolving this problem by diplomatic means."

"But it obviously is not an option that we intend to consider if we can help it," Armitage said in an interview on the Al Jazeera television network.

Armitage also was skeptical of the regime diplomacy will have, he said, "We are not trying to block them. That's fine. Let's see if it works."

State though Secretary of State Colin Powell will attend an European Union and work to forge with diplomats from Iran and other countries, he has no plans to meet with Iranian diplomats on US nuclear concerns, other department officials say.

Responding to diplomatic impasse that Iran is stepping up production of a dual-use gas that could be processed to make nuclear weapons, a Bush administration official said that illustrates why the United States is concerned about Iran's programs.

Despite the Iran's Iranian pledge to the three European allies, the administration intends to take its case against Iran to the UN Security Council for consideration of economic and diplomatic sanctions against Iran.

That would not be until after the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency meets Nov. 25 in Vienna. The UN agency is expected to support the Bush administration case with evidence of Iran's record of not reporting its uranium enrichment program to a verifiable map.

Whether the United States would gain the votes it needs at the United Nations is not clear before revealing Iraq, the administration did not get the Security Council support it sought.

Already suspicious that Iran a developing nuclear weapons, the administration now has intelligence provided by a resistance group that Iran is trying to adapt missiles to deliver them, Powell said Wednesday. AP

TOP OF THE HILL, BUT UNDER THE HEAP
A view of the city of La Paz, Bolivia, Nov. 17. Lower and narrower neighborhoods are for wealthy people while the dangerous slopes of the mountains surrounding the capital are for indigenous descendant population. Rich and poor gap is wider than ever in Latin America, according to UN reports.

US, Iraqi forces kill 15 rebels in Mosul

MOSUL, Iraq—At least 15 rebels were killed in Mosul in a US-led effort to root out insurgency in Iraq, but fresh violence broke out in the heart of Baghdad when gunmen attacked police targets.

As the US military area more scratched than ever by a nationwide crackdown against rebels ahead of a planned January vote, top brass said 'costs of duty could be extended and Washington vowed to reassurance or the lack of help from leading European powers.

A force of about 800 newly trained Iraqi commandos staged an overnight raid into the Old City of Mosul, the third largest town in Iraq and the country's northern capital.

The target was thought to be a meeting place for insurgents who have wreaked havoc in the city in recent months, raiding police stations and precipitating a major US-Iraqi offensive involving thousands of troops.

"We are finding the (insurgent) pockets with Iraqis, and going and taking them to come out and fight," said Col. Robert Brown, a senior US military commander in Mosul. "Every time they fight, we will kill a lot of them."

Overall 31 rebels had been killed and 45 other suspects detained in joint operations throughout the city over the past 24 hours. AFP

6 US allies refuse to join Iraq mission

WASHINGTON—At least six Nato allies are refusing to send military instructors to help the United States train Iraqi officers, another indication of the Bush administration's drive for support for its effort to stabilize Iraq.

The six nations—Germany, Greece, Belgium, Spain, Luxembourg and France—had refused to contribute troops to the US-led coalition that overthrew President Saddam Hussein and in the postwar campaign against insurgents.

The administration was hoping to forge a consensus on postwar peacemaking. The project is joint. Iraqi officers will not receive combat duties and is part of a broader security program.

A state department official close to the alliance said Friday that all 26 Nato allies voted on Wednesday at alliance headquarters in Brussels for the training program and agreed to help fund it. However, at least six held out from playing any active role and refused to send officers to Nato staging areas in Istanbul, Virginia, and Ulm, Belgium.

Still, the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, stressed that all Nato allies, including the holdouts, approved the plan by consensus and were committed to paying a share of the costs.

Meanwhile, the state department's deputy spokesperson, Adam Ereli, said of the holdouts: "It's a decision of the individual countries that does not undermine the importance or value of the overall mission." AP

UN rejects US push to ban cloning of human embryos

UNITED NATIONS—A divided United Nations on Friday rejected a US-led campaign to ban all cloning of human embryos, beholding for stem-cell research, as it turned to the assembly committee opted instead for a nonbinding declaration.

With some showing the position as the destruction of human life and others as a potentially lifesaving avenue of medical research, "we thought it would be unbearable for the international community to be divided on an issue like cloning," said Ambassador Mohamed Bennouna of Morocco, chair of the assembly's messy working legal committee.

"The lowest line is that stem cell research will advance.

The declaration will not chill stem cell research," said Bernhard Siegel, a Florida attorney who led a lobbying drive by scientists and patients advocacy groups to defend cloning for therapeutic ends.

Adopting an opposite viewpoint later on Thursday between supporters and foes of Washington's three-year drive for a broad anti-cloning treaty, the UN committee shunted aside the US proposal by consensus.

By its place, the panel adopted a resolution instructing a working group to meet in February for talks on a political declaration put forward by Italy as a face-saving compromise.

Some suggested the nonbinding move a nonbinding statement calling on nations to adopt laws "to prohibit any attempts to create human life through cloning processes and any research intended to achieve that aim."

While proponents of embryonic stem cell studies had predicted with the term "human life," they agreed this text could harm the brain of future negotiations, diplomats said.

US envoy Carolyn Wilkins had no comments after the vote.

In Washington, state department spokesperson Adam Ereli said the United States was pleased the United Nations had now moved to the question of cloning.

"We are proud of our efforts to prevent human cloning. So the fact that there isn't any action by the UN to endorse cloning is a modest success," Ereli told reporters.

Opponents of the US plan said the outcome showed that a majority of the 191 UN member-nations were set to keep the door open to therapeutic cloning, in which human embryos are cloned as part of research such as stem cell studies.

But Ambassador Bruno Stagno Ugarte of Costa Rica, who led nations supporting Washington's plan, said it would have seen to a straight up-or-down vote but instead faced death through procedural challenges, as happened twice before in the panel.

Friday's committee action left a little over two weeks after US elections in which stem cell research was an issue.

Opinion polls showed strong support for such studies, and the US Congress has so far thwarted President George W. Bush's plan for a tough ban that bans therapeutic cloning.

But Bush has on his own executive the use of federal money for stem cell research, allowing US funding only for studies on embryonic stem cell lines that existed as of August 2001. Reuters

BE SURE TO WEAR SOME FLOWERS: An Afghan man with a turban decorated with artificial flowers carries some fruits he bought at a market in Kabul Nov. 18, in a country where the per capita income is about $300 a year. president-elect Hamid Karzai has vowed to accelerate rebuilding of Afghanistan after years of war and drought. AP/File

Africa leaders pledge peace in Great Lakes

DAR ES SALAAM—Eleven African countries signed a UN-backed peace deal for the Great Lakes region on Saturday pledging to end genocide, war, hunger and disease that killed 3 million men more than a decade.

Thirteen heads of state signed the peace framework, the first step toward stability in an area encompassing Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)—on Saturday at the close of a two-day summit in Dar es Salaam.

"No one has got everything they wanted from the process, but everyone has got what they need—a real chance for peace, stability, democracy and development in a war region," UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said at a signing ceremony.

The Dar es Salaam Declaration pledges regional leaders to end cross-building measures, including efforts to disarm rebels and refugees from and cooperate on ending the illegal exploitation of refugees.

Officials call the pledge an important major regional stability for one of Africa's most disaster-regions, but it contains few details on implementation. The new steps are to be considered at a historic summit scheduled for November 2005.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, chair of the 53-member African Union, said the Great Lakes peace framework to act as an example of Africa's new willingness to seek solutions to its own problems.

Obasanjo told the gathered heads of state he had been named of "unflinching" support by the international community for the peace process, which he expected to be implemented by yesterday. Reuters

UN employees assail senior officials but spare Annan

UNITED NATIONS—The UN staff union on Friday panned a newly-appointed watchdog group to look into allegations of sexual misconduct by UN officials in war-ravaged countries.

The union came just days after Annan performed the head of the UN's internal oversight office, Dileep Nair, who had been targeted with allegations of harassment and favoritism.

The union resolution said the oversight mechanism was neither "transparent and constitutes a failure to properly investigate," and that it undermined "a lack of integrity, particularly at the highest levels of the organization."

Union president Evamarie Blasi was not dense nevertheless had the support of the staff union, telling reporters: "He is in a very difficult job under very difficult circumstances. He is doing his best."

That public declaration of support came amid heavy media scrutiny after a leaked draft resolution edited to send a note of concern. Adviser to discuss following a string of scandals that have plagued the UN chief in recent months.

Another top official, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Ruud Lubbers, was cleared by Annan in July after a female member of his staff complained that he had sexually harassed her.

Earlier this year, Annan declared the resignation of his deputy secretary general, Louise Frechette, after a damning report found inspection security lapses surrounding the Aug. 19, 2003, bombing of the UN's Baghdad offices.

That attack killed 22 people and injured more than 100, and claimed the life of the UN's top official in Iraq at the time, Sergio Vieira de Mello. AFP

Greeks: Alexander was not bisexual

ATHENS—A group of Greek lawyers are threatening to sue Warner Bros film studios and Oliver Stone, director of the widely anticipated film "Alexander," for suggesting Alexander the Great was bisexual.

"The lawyers have already sent an open judicial note to the studio and director demanding they include a statement in the film stressing the ancient historical sources on which the movie is allegedly based," Nikos Sotiriou, who spearheads the campaign by 25 lawyers, said on Friday.

Stone was quoted on the MSNBC.com website as telling the upcoming edition of Playboy magazine that the film's depiction of Alexander would offend some.

"Oh, go into his bi sexuality it may offend some people, but sexuality in those days was a different thing," he was quoted as saying.

While the film starring Colin Farrell and Angelina Jolie will be released on Nov. 24, lawmakers said he has already gathered enough information regarding the content of the movie to suggest there are "inappropriate references."

"We have not seen the film but from the information we have already there are references to his alleged homosexuality, a fact that to the limited but document or written on Alexander," he said. Reuters

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OPINION

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Down the drain?

LAST year, the Bangko Sentral recorded over $7.6 billion in remittances from Filipinos working overseas. If remittances routed through informal channels are included, many economists believe, the total may even be double that amount. But a recently released Asian Development Bank study revealed that much of that money must have had a less-than-lasting effect on the economy.

EDITORIAL

In a sense, this finding is counter-perceptual. Who has not returned to the province to see an all-concrete house, built by an overseas contract worker's money, rising in the middle of one's hometown? But those houses stand out not only because they are made of cement, they stand out because they are all too few.

The ADB study, titled "Enhancing the efficiency of overseas workers remittances," found that much of the remittance inflow paid for consumables. A key paragraph (warning: economic jargon ahead!) reached a discouraging conclusion: "Beneficiary household decision makers allocated their remittance income to food, utilities and other expenses for household operations, personal care and effect, communications and transportation. In terms of value, however, monetary allocations were highest for food consumed at homes and education. It is noted, however, that aside from household expenses, allocations for education and expenses for special occasions were also observed."

In other words, and with the exception of school-related expenses, the bulk of remittances went to daily necessities and the occasional fiesta splurge. (We must include cellular phones as a necessity, because for families separated by thousands of miles, cell phones actually represent an improvement in the quality of life.)

So far, so understandable. The reason many Filipinos (as much as 10 percent of the entire population) leave to work abroad—the reason, for instance, why families with master's degrees accept assignments as maids in Hong Kong or caregivers in Israel—is poverty. They leave precisely to help the families they left behind pay for the daily necessities: to put food on the table, to have enough money to ride the bus, to pay for water and electricity, to buy soap.

What, we may well ask, is wrong with that?

Only that OFW families invariably find themselves running hard merely to stay in place. The social costs of working abroad are severe: an OFW family that neglects to send the children to school or build a better house little by bit or fund a small business may end up with the fancy component system with the latest sub-woofers, but not much else. In other words, they go through the emotional upheaval of migration, only to find that at the end of it they are back where they started—still looking for the money to pay for the daily necessities.

On one level, it is the responsibility of the overseas workers to build a nest's egg, either by saving some of the money or investing it, say in the children's education, real estate, or a family business. The business community or other parts of civil society may have a role to encourage the OFW to plan for his future, but the responsibility is his.

On another level, however, it is the responsibility of the government to put the billions of dollars in remittances to more productive use.

Consider the following, from the first paragraph of the study: "Migrant remittances represent the most direct, immediate and far-reaching benefit to migrants and their countries of origin. They are a more constant source of income to developing countries than official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other private flows."

The government's work is thus cut out for it. It must encourage more remittances to go legal and flow through the formal banking system. It must strengthen the link between development in the provinces, where two-thirds of all workers come from, and countryside financial institutions, such as rural banks and cooperatives. It must accept the challenge of foreign banks to securitize the remittance inflow to fund development projects or support microfinance institutions.

Only then will more all-concrete houses rise in the countryside.

Is Vice President De Castro a Cabinet member?

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

MY good friend Barnabate C. Fernandez, Jr., who teaches in the UP College of Law and is a former member of the Constitution on Audit, sent me a letter expressing his views on an important constitutional question. It concerns the multiple appointments extended by President Macapagal-Arroyo to Vice President Noli de Castro.

Professor Fernandez notes that De Castro has been designated as "Cabinet Official for the Regional Development Council for the Affluent. This is on top of and in addition to his earlier appointments/designations as Alternate Chair of the National Anti-Poverty Commission; Chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC); and Presidential Adviser for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)." My friend doubts that even multiple appointments/designations are constitutionally sanctioned under the following provisions of the 1987 Charter:

"The x x x, Vice President, x x x shall not, unless otherwise provided in this Constitution, hold any other office or employment during their tenure." (Art. VII, Sec. 13, Constitution)

"The Vice-President may be appointed as a Member of the Cabinet. Such appointment requires no confirmation." (Ibid)

Fernandez says that pursuant to the said provisions, the Vice President is prohibited from holding any other office or employment during his entire "unless otherwise provided in this Constitution." Elsewhere in the same Sec. 13, the Constitution provides otherwise by authorizing the President to appoint the Vice President as a member of the Cabinet."

Whence now the words 'a likewise' with a capital letter M, indicating a single appointment to a regular Membership in the Cabinet, not as a Appointment Head?

"By simultaneously holding the positions in the Cabinet, Fernandez adds, "did Vice President De Castro become a Member of the Cabinet within the contemplation of the Constitution? Necessarily that above provision have Cabinet rank, it does not follow that he thereby became a Member of the Cabinet. In a real sense, he holds only the rank but not the position of a regular member of the Cabinet."

At a press time, "by analogy, the Court Administrator in the Supreme Court and the Government Corporate Counsel only enjoy the rank of a justice of the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeals but not the title of Justice. That is why I am designated why they don't the title of Justice before their names."

Fernandez recalls that Chief Justice Enrique M. Fernando was emphatic in saying that unless one has been appointed to the office (applies) to it. The Supreme Court opposed the grant to the regular that the Court Administrator exercises disciplinary jurisdiction over all courts except the Supreme Court.

It is true that some former Court Administrators called themselves Justice but that was because they had previously served on the Court of Appeals. Examples are justices Bellosillo and Presbitero Velasco who were appointed from that Court and as could not have calling themselves Justice. This is a prerogative only the President is vested. I believe also that we have that background merely accepted that title because there non-judicial offices did not make them justices.

Constitutional Fernandez raises a thought-provoking question that at least deserves serious study: Has the Constitution been violated by the multiple appointments or designations extended to Vice President De Castro to the President of the Philippines? Presidents Arroyo is by her reluctance and studying not a lawyer but no economist. She probably has not fully read the Constitution of 1987, which is unaware of her's owing to its wordiness and occasional volubility. Even lawyers have the same failing (or just frivolous).

Given her career inadequacy, Presidents Arroyo does not depend much on her Legal Advisers' value it comes to the proper understanding of the Constitution, which she is mandated to enforce. I am wondering if Secretaries Gonzalez, who now occupies that important position, has studied the question here posed or if she was consulted at all by the President on this matter. Vice President De Castro must also have some lawyers on his staff who might have advised him on the meaning of the non-interested provisions applicable to him. I have they?

Some cases amended matters, like the late Ramon A. Gonzales, a worthy gladiator of the bar, would bring this matter to the Supreme Court for a categorical decision. But the likelihood is that is still during the case on the ground that the petitioner is not a proper party. That is the usual cop-out. Moreover, there is the considerable expense of litigation these days, especially when the lawyer is one of their better than the material-thread pressure.

The King and I

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

THE STORY is told about a dying husband who called his wife and said, "My dear, when I die, I want you to marry Juan." Surprised, the wife replied, "I thought Juan was your enemy!" "Yes, he is my enemy," the husband said. "That's why I want him to suffer too."

* * *

In today's Gospel (Lk. 23, 35-43), as Jesus was dying, two criminals were up with their final conversations. One was defiant and angry till the end, while the other was humble and repentant.

How will you die? What will be your last words when you die? That depends a lot on how you lived. We answer what kind of a life we have lived. If you have a humble heart, you will not say anything like the good thief, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

Take the road of humility and you can't go wrong. Humility will bring you home.

* * *

Last Tuesday evening, I heard the confession of a dying man. As I listened to the heart of the 87-year-old man who had been blessed so much by many lady, I also listened to the heart of a lonely lone man who filled up the vacuum in his heart with many prayers. He had to do all. No matter it, he had it, but he did not have peace. He did not have God. In cases, all he kept saying was, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." It was only a humbling moment, to be there to accompany a sincere, humble person to the doorstep of his home. I thought I saw God smile, and I thought I heard the angels sing when I gave him absolution in that chair in room, that cool Tuesday November evening.

Wherever you are in the January, May, July or November of your life, come home. The Father's loving embrace awaits you. Do not stay away too far or too long from the Father.

* * *

Do you thank God? Do you, by the life you are living, often and deliberate this? We exist a closed fist to God whenever we sin and disobey Him. A closed fist is a symbol of self-idolatry. Selfishness is that which leads us to sin. Because of selfishness we close our fist to God and to others because we put priority to our selfish desires.

A closed fist is also that which we see in our fellow others. We definitely hurt others and cut our selves whenever we sin. As you go through life, do you have a closed fist or an open hand?

* * *

I just received a letter from my cousin, Fr. Dionisio Garcia, who is recovering from a near fatal stroke. I remember Father Dino in his prime. He was intended. He had power, good looks, a good following and a busy ministry. In one instant, the Lord changed all that and made him realize that those were all human endeavor is no match to the power of God. Sometimes, it is our obedience that God desires from us, to begin his desire with the words: "The almighty and merciful God wants our total obedience and not so much our sacrifice, basic offerings or any contribution or any human endeavor. Our endeavors to please God should always end in failure. All he asks is for our obedience to Him, and our obedience to love one another." Amen, amen!

* * *

EXCUSES. My recollection in Cebu, Mount Carmel (Pink Church) is set for today, Nov. Jesus Rev. 1 21, at 3.30 p.m. on the Feast of Christ the King. Say in honor our King as we come to the end of the liturgical year and welcome Him with joyful and clean hearts.

* * *

Taking about coming home, Dave Aquino, president of the SSO, reports all as SVDs for all solves vocabularies at Christ the King Seminary starting at 3 p.m. on Nov. 27. Topic: SSO spirituality. All of us need to come home, to listen, to remember and to be grateful, so that we can be renewed in our service to Christ the King.

* * *

Sedang Diocese and the St. Thomas's Association of Asians have an exhibit at the Century Park Hotel on from Nov. 15 to Dec. 3 for the benefit of Sofo de Jesi Steamo de Paul. For all should plant before the King's disposal whatever talents or blessing we have. Are you serving your King, or are you just serving yourself?

* * *

If there is something you desire: see for one's soul, you don't need it. Music, gits, related, especially the Christmas. There are so many people in this world of things you don't even see or need. The gifts shared (both through joy of the (TEXTART).

Whether you share your talents or your saving, make sure you give with your heart, for that is all that matters in the kingdom of God. God has been generous to you, be generous to others. In spite of the hard times we are in, remember, it is still better to give than to receive.

* * *

Julia Blat, the visionary from Bosna, will join us in a Healing Mass at Santuario de Nuestra Señora de la Paz y de la Jesus on Dec. 12 at 6 p.m. **Christ the King Seminary on Dec. 7 at 6 p.m.** Julia, a victim soul and healer, reminds us again that we can offer even our suffering to our King. Julia also reminds us of joyful service to Christ the King.

* * *

A moment with the Lord:
Lord Jesus, have mercy on me a sinner, my Lord, my God, and my King. Amen.

* * *

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Notes on a court martial

REVEILLE

Raissa J. Jayralen

[illegible] under the command and control of the members of the court martial was in the uniforms that they wore to the opening of the trial. While the six appointed officers, the law member, the prosecutors and the defense panels were in service blazer with medals, the accused were all open-necked office shirts as though for some arresting some concise seminar or meeting in the Philippine Military academy just to take personal exams where one is facing a subject, the cadet is required to appear in the classroom in proper uniform with ribbons, a reminder of the educational aim of the leadership. I took several moments; they call them Sunday, and to finally to or finally not; as I speak to you right now, and it was certainly not inconsistency but to me.

Now that Lacuna is a civilian, he will no longer have to wear the uniform and perhaps that is the best thing one can say on this matter.

In the right confines of the hearing room, the three rows were reserved for a monitoring team of lawyers from the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP). The group was led by IBP president Feliciano Bautista, a U.P. graduate (cum laude of 1966) and bachelors of my son, Paolo. Another member of the team was Rodrigo Aviso, Phi Chi of 1970 and UP Law Class of 1980.

It is commendable that the IBP has taken an interest in this case. The issue facing the AFP both in a court martial that is viewed as a kangaroo court, while there may be differences of opinion on legal issues and procedures, transparency in the conduct of the proceedings will provide the trial with a greater degree of credibility and acceptance.

* * *

Just to digress a bit, one of the most high-profile cases handled at length was that of Col. William "Billy" Mitchell of the US Army (there was no Air Force then). In October 1925, he was charged with "conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline" for making statements critical of US defense policies. In a trial lasting less than two months (Dec. 21 to Dec. 17), Mitchell was found guilty and sentenced to five years' suspension of rank, pay and command, and allowance. He resigned to take up farming in Virginia. After several years, problems with filed to relieve this blot on his service record but none of them prospered. His vindication came about in 1947 with the establishment of a separate air force service, the [illegible].

* * *

As to the fifty-two-fold court martial, Garcia is facing a charge of "conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline." However, the charge has by now, three days the specifications are a word space. Mitchell was charged for being too spoken and criticizing his superiors; Garcia for violating his oath to an officer; for allegedly acquiring and holding the rank of lieutenant colonel despite an order issued by the commander-in-chief policy governing public officials.

* * *

The issue of "great courts" should be an issue [illegible] for Filipinos. The "great court," although not really great, is headed by US immigration officials in individuals who have qualified for permanent residency in the United States. Given how many of us have relatives, parents, sons and daughters in America or Canada, I never assume that there are a lot of green card holders in the Philippines, including possibly a number working in government. By the way, in the case of permanent residents of Canada, they have what is known as a Permanent Resident Card. One big difference in immigration policy of the two countries as regards permanent residents is this. Among other grounds, a permanent resident of the United States may lose his status if he/she "has been absent from the US for a continuous period in excess of 180 days." (To be exact of Canada, permanent residents are able to comply with "residency obligations if they accumulate two years of personal presence in Canada, not necessarily consecutive, in every five-year period.

* * *

The Philippine Constitution, specifically Article III, Accountability of Public Officers, Section 18 reads: "Public officers and employees owe the State and this Constitution allegiance at all times and any public officer or employee who seeks to change his citizenship or acquire the status of an immigrant of another country during his tenure shall be dealt with by law." Note that the law does not seem of any use which has been passed imposing a penalty for this offense. From the US standpoint, the local embassy has already issued a concurrence certifying Lacuna's green card for citizenship purposes. Perhaps it is time for government to enforce this constitutional mandate by requiring public officials to declare not just their statements of Assets and Liabilities but also data they are not just business residences of other countries. Otherwise they cannot be making a mockery of their oath of office.

* * *

My own commander in chief is calling on all alumni of St. Thomas's College, Manila (TCM) to "Light Kalpit" on a get-together on Thursday, Nov. 25 at 4 p.m. at Pavilion II of Stick Club Golf and Country Club. Relive the good old days and join in the marching of a new TCM Alumni.

Resolution of Oakwood mutiny court martial

TO BE is a bit of irony in the two court-martial proceedings now going on in the United States of the Philippines.

Some 294 military officers and men who call themselves the "Magdalo" group are having some court martial for their takeover of the Oakwood hotel in Makati City on July 27, 2003 to protest corruption in the AFP. Most are going to the court martial of retired major Gen. Carlos Garcia over the same incidents the Magdalo soldiers engaged in justify their mutiny.

COMMENTARY

Raul J. Pangalangan

By any corporate yardstick, a few weeks before Garcia's court

hit the headlines, the Magdalo soldiers publicly apologized to President Macapagal-Arroyo for their act. They edited, without asking for clemency, for another chance to join the military.

The manoeuvres may be quietly laughing among themselves about the unexpected turn of events. The charges filed against Garcia before the court-martial and Sandiganbayan practically validate the complaints they aired during the Oakwood takeover.

Any surprisingly public statement was turned in their favor. Their earliest apology reached a soft spot in the hearts of many. They gained more sympathy when they asked that they, rather than the lower-ranking officers and enlisted personnel who followed their lead, should be held responsible for the consequences of their action.

Last week, 117 congressmen signed a resolution calling on the President to grant "full and complete amnesty to the military personnel involved in the Oakwood mutiny.

Amnesty

Even if the President is inclined to grant the congressmen's request, however, her hands are tied. In the absence of congressional approval, the abolition of the accused by their commander in chief is not legally binding. The Constitution requires the concurrence of a majority of the lawmakers before any amnesty proclamation can take effect.

But it is doubtful if Congress has the time or motivation to discuss the proposed amnesty. The legislative calendar is loaded with congressional investigations and pending economic measures.

It's been five months since the proposed 2005 national budget was calendared for deliberations by the House of Representatives but, up to now, the appropriations bill still has to be released from the committee level for plenary discussion. Even if so approved, the bill will be shortened in the Senate where there is bound to be another round of hearings, amendments and debates.

From the looks of it, with less than a month to go before Congress goes on a long Christmas break, the old budget may have to be reenacted for the second time. So perish the thought of Congress approving an amnesty resolution within the remaining session days left to the end of 2004.

On top of this legislative obstacle, the President has to contend with the recommendation of the Feliciano Commission that investigated the Oakwood incident that, among others, the people behind the mutiny should be held liable for the legal consequences of their act.

Liability

The commission claim that the lenient treatment by past administrations of rebel soldiers was one of the reasons for the spate of military adventurism in the country. Hence, no strong admonition for the prosecution of the leaders of the Magdalo group.

This further would be creating trouble from civil society and the business community if the events the mutineers with had gotten. Thus amnesty will add to the public perception that she is beholden to the military for the role it played in enabling her to assert to 2004.

But if she allows the court martial to continue in spite of the virtual acknowledgment of the corruption complaints with the filing of the charges against Garcia, she would be to ease the fears of AFP personnel who share the sentiments of the Oakwood mutineers.

The President is caught in a "damned if you and damned if you don't" situation. But having charge raised in they are is not available alternative other call hanging, the Oakwood incidents is the best bet for her efforts to unite the military behind her administration. She needs a business military like a leader in her hand.

The change in public perception about the Magdalo group brought about by the filing of corruption charges against Garcia gives the President an opportunity to quickly resolve the Oakwood problem without having even to go against the recommendation of the Feliciano Commission.

With the lawyers' cooperation, the court martial of the mutineers can proceed with dispatch. The contending parties can generate their request for assistance with the human interests. At most in the end of trials, the members of the court martial can immediately deliberate on the case.

Alternative

Most likely, the young officers will be found guilty. It can very finding would embarrass the President, the Feliciano Commission and other high-ranking military officials who have earlier made adverse statements about the action taken by the Magdalo soldiers.

But here's the catch: the public apology the last time we lives were lost during the mutiny and the "retraction" of their gripes by way of the filing of corruption charges against Garcia can be used to justify the reduction of rebel-type penalties may be imposed and their convicted terms to the minimum.

If imprisonment is part of the penalty, the period they have been under detention [illegible] a part already) can be credited to the prison sentence. Their good behavior during confinement can be considered to allow a further reduction in the prison term. The net effect is, they will either be immediately released or serve time in jail only for a short period.

Once the penalty is served, the President can order their reinstatement in the military with [illegible] the same principle that allowed dishonorably discharged military officials in the past to resist their uniforms with great success.

So what will happen to the criminal cases filed against them in the civil courts? The prosecutors and the dockets until they are quietly dismissed for failure to prosecute.

Under this scenario, the Oakwood mutiny can be put to rest with the minimum loss of face to the affected parties.

Literary franchises

AT LARGE

Nina Terencio David

If was Rhoda Trenka who first alerted me to it. In weary fascination that is apparently taking the road, she has made her own version of the first story "Hello, I said Rhoda. "He writes mysteries set in side famous books and literary characters make an appearance. Shakespeare!"

Rhoda's characteristic recommendation triggered a memory, a review of a book called "Something Rotten" where a former detective works with, among others, Hamlet the Prince of Denmark. I remember reading the new review with a sniffing disdain. I passed on the book.

It turns out that "Something Rotten" is the latest—and brilliant—volume in Jasper Fforde's novels about Thursday Next, who in the years of the Crimean War, is a member of the Special Operations Network. "Its policing agency that operates within fiction to safeguard the stability of the written word."

Having just finished this latest installment, I can assure potential readers that you can begin with "Something Rotten" and it all makes sense. Fforde's cleverly decoding of Thursday's intrigue through the world of books and of Swindon, the English city that is her assigned home. In this one volume alone, you can travel back and forth and even sideways through time, even as characters from the past, present and future meet in tales and disappear with little notice or reason.

Still, "Something Rotten" is not the most convenient place to begin. That's in the world of book mania, and other in the "previous" reality he circles within the world of Thursday Next, her family, friends, workmates and enemies. Though I bet the avid reader can do this on the first [illegible] books. Just provide the people who love books, who take fictional characters to heart, and who gladly surrender themselves to the invented reality in this and another [illegible] as well, will find plenty to laugh at, sympathize with and be fascinated by.

* * *

"SOMETHING ROTTEN" and the other Thursday Next novels should be on the reading list of every bookworm, and that includes all who are trying [illegible] for that matter. Though one gets the sense that Hamlet is showing off, it's fairly obvious that he regards his ex-boss moral, but super-

ouity fiction, with fondness and familiarity. And characters, even in the most reverent of classics, are in him not icons but real people, with real people's weaknesses, foolishness and inconsistency.

In "Something Rotten," Hamlet is allowed to step out of his play so he could "solve himself" (it was true what he says being "misrepresented as something of a thickener" in the Bard.) While "fictional characters are rarely troubled by existential perplexity," the author notes, "Hamlet would worry about having nothing to worry about if he had nothing to worry about." Unfortunately, the world Hamlet visits to entwine in the gulp of anti-Danish irony in the Prince. Denmark must save himself all on Thursday's "Crunch Eddy." A most amusing portion is when Thursday and Hamlet drop by Swindon's version of Elsinore, and the prince is caught in the throes of a midlife crisis. "Self-pity," he moans, "that is the question...whether 'tis nobler on the purse to choose stinky mocha over plain, or to take a cup and go."

I can, by the way, doing a bit of time-shifting myself through Hamlet's world, having started with the last book and getting ready to read the second volume, "Lost in Good Book." I'll have to take a chance on making sense of Thursday Next's future when I read "The Well of Lost Plots." After and "The Well of Lost Plots," list of time rising I'm sure I'll have great fun in the process.

* * *

ANOTH ER literary franchise worth reading is the "No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency" series, set in Botswana and featuring the plucky and utterly sensible Precious Ramotswe, "Botswana's most

Hacienda Luisita

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

brothers, and forced on to become real industrialists in the interests.

The agrarian question was clearly not the issue in this dispute, but now it has flushed, both emotionally and ideologically, the conflict class lies at the violent death of 14 people last November. The public discourse that the tussle between the workers as the super mill who were on strike, and the management of Hacienda Luisita, Inc. (HLI), a corporation who had put up the barricade. When the police and military troops appeared on the scene with an armored personnel carrier, the simple message instantly communicated by this picture was the class of a government coming to the rescue of an obscene ruling class.

The classic themes of the frisk-rebellion and the fascist revolution have suddenly come to life. The class wars of the 1930s and the 1960s have returned in the political consciousness of the times, and the democratic claims of the Aquino years. The two fabulously powerful families and deeply intrigued of their friendships. And has come icon of the first Edsa, Cory Aquino, is dragged back to the front stage to answer for the mistakes in the provision in Hacienda Luisita. The Marcoses would have been tempted not to leave the memory of those images.

But the fact that the armed underground movement is exploiting these events for its own purposes should not diminish the public outrage over this brutal and unconscionable degree of

Commentary

Raul J. Pangalangan

[illegible] Garcia's court martial [illegible] Garcia's case [illegible] Garcia's court martial [illegible] Garcia's court martial [illegible] Garcia's court martial

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to ...

Editor Juan F. Sarmiento Jr.

Can the PNR get back on track?

THE DERAILMENT a few days ago of the train bearing transportation officials on their way to Quezon province to examine the wreckage of several coaches that flew off the tracks on Nov. 12 highlights the poor health of the Philippine National Railways.

Six people died and hundreds were injured when a Manila-bound PNR train from Legazpi City was derailed on Nov. 12 in Padre Burgos town in Quezon.

Authorities were still determining whether the crash was caused by a problem in the tracks, by mechanical failure or by human error.

The train was said to be travelling at 70 kph while negotiating a curb when it should be cruising at 20 kph. Theft of railroad tracks and spikes had been reported in the area. Overspeeding on a line with missing tracks and weakened rails is a recipe for disaster.

The PNR, now suffering from huge losses, used to be in the pink of health. Its trains were clean and on time, it even had dining cars and sleeper coaches.

What happened? The opening of the Maharlika Highway in Southern Luzon, which paved the way for travel by bus, car and truck, ate into the revenues of the PNR.

A small budget coupled with corruption has aggravated the situation.

A senator says the government committed a crime because it allowed the PNR to run trains from Manila to Legazpi City, knowing that the tracks are dilapidated and unusable.

Because of space constraints, Talk of the Town will print the article of Jose Ma. Sison-sola II, PNR general manager, in the next issue.

Rehabilitation will not revive a carcass

By Rep. Edcel C. Lagman
1st District, Albay

The railway train, known in the past as the "Celestial Iron Horse," was an unpredictable transport in accessing and exploiting the colonies' resources and a veritable instrument in fortifying colonization as the hinterlands were connected to the mainstream of government and economics. Thus, the railway system was also an engine for growth, which engendered nationalism and catalyzed national unification as an impetus for independence movements.

The Spanish colonial regime was a shoehorn in public works and development. It was only in 1887 when a London-based company was allowed to construct and subsequently operate an 189[illegible] the direct-lined Manila-Dagupan Railroad, more than 60 years after England constructed the world's first railroad.

Taft's legacy

Dr. Arturo G. Corpuz, a University of the Philippines urban planning professor, documents that in 1906 then Secretary of War William H. Taft underscored that the construction of railroads was "the most effective way to increase prosperity in the Philippines and create "real improvements in the welfare, education, and uplifting of the people."

Thus, the construction of the Manila-Dagupan Line (Philippine National Railways South (PNRS) is considered the "most important railroad line built in the Philippines under the American regime." It links Manila to Legazpi City, traversing 474 km, and was built by the colonial government to Tabaco, Albay.

The construction of the Manila-Southern Tagalog-Bicol railroad linkage subsequently spanned 21 years from 1907, when the construction of the line in Manila commenced, to 1938 when the Manila-Legazpi service was inaugurated.

Taft's arduous commitment was ominously derailed by the much-paused construction of the Main Line South, which continued when the Commonwealth. By the time it was completed in 1938, the tracks were in utter obsolescence.

Culpable neglect

The train tragedy on Nov. 12 highlights the decrepit state of the PNR and the government's culpable neglect. These major issues affect the PNR: an antiquated system, lack of government funding support and poor management.

The rehabilitation of the PNR will only narrow-scales rehabilitation as expensive and inutile option. Rehabilitation basically entails the restoration of an infrastructure to its original estimated state.

The PNR South Line was a 1,067-meter narrow gauge track which is narrow. It aggravates interval instability and diminishes speed, compared with the modern, efficient and safe 1.435-meter-SI-mm. standard track used in most countries. The national railway system is so obsolete that only the blinking portion of the South Line has double tracks and it takes almost an overnight to travel from Bayanan, Manila to Legazpi City.

In 1990 during the 9th Congress, I had reportedly opposed the rehabilitation of the PNR South Line as an unviable project. I then proposed, as I still maintain, that instead of rehabilitation, a construction of a modern railway system be undertaken to optimize the utilization of funds.

A total of P2.33 billion was wasted in the rehabilitation works. Invoices (known as Infloves; (1) Main Line South Rehabilitation Project Phase I from 1992 to 1995 (Tutuban to Naga) through a loan from Asian Bank for Reinstatement Construction amounting to P696 million; and (2) Main Line South Revitalization Project Phase II from 1993 to 1998 (San Pedro, Laguna to Lucena and Naga to Legazpi) through Export Finance and Insurance Corp. of Australia, amounting to P1,635 billion.

Aside from the foreign realties and concessions, who else profited from the total blow-rehabilitation?

Folly

As if the folly is not enough, the government is repeatedly negotiating a P600 million loan for another rehabilitation venture. It is impossible to resurrect a carcass.

The PNR has been losing money for years. Its only major source of revenues is the rent from its Tutuban properties. It owns other valuable real estate assets to outlet dowry to profitable use. It also has a significant amount of land equipment it could sell, unless it wants to be a curator of books.

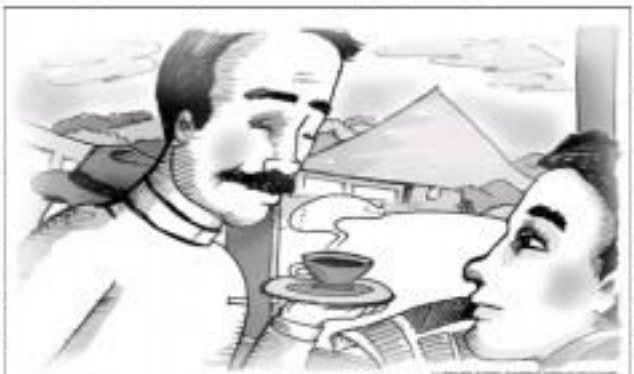
The rails-mapped PNR is further mocked by a miserable budget of P333 million this year, which is not even enough to pay its 5,000 contributive attorneys-at-law.

Inefficient, if not corrupt, managers, who are armed principally with partisan credentials, have contributed to the deterioration of the trains as "rolling coffins." It cannot even secure the railway tracks from pilferages of tracks, ties, rings and bolts and replace immediately the stolen parts.

The Commission on Audit has unearthed anomalous transactions amounting to millions of pesos and many PNR executives are now facing graft charges, four busted boats are raided.

The train is the cheapest mode of passenger and freight transportation. An efficient railway system induces production in the rural areas as markets become more accessible. It is a tenet to progress and development. Sadly, the government must prioritize the construction of a modern railroad infrastructure even as it must streamline and professionalize the PNR bureaucracy.

(Lagman was a three-term Congressman from 1987 to 1998. He was elected again in May, becoming the sole Bagon Demokrasya member of the 13th Congress. He didn't file the special commission on overseas workers affairs.)



Remembering the trains of our youth

By Plinnod and Pluvia Lorenzo
Retired government employees
Albay District, Legazpi City

The recent derailment of several Philippine National Railways coaches bound for Manila brings to mind a time when the trains evoked happy thoughts instead of sadness and exasperation. It is in Legazpi City where the famous Bicol Express begins and ends its daily run.

There was a time of greatness for the railways, especially for us who lived in urban communities called the pre-war years. Then, we were very young lives. But your unsolicited school students when Pearl Harbor was bombed, but the pleasant memories of the trains of our youth remain with us.

Air of gentility

We readily recall the impression that the trains and the passengers gave us, beholding them of us in the third class coaches: there was an air of quiet gentility of people who were kind to and considerate of each other.

Every number of years, the PNR had the Rolling Equipment, consisting like a train for inspectors checked the number of passengers in the seats. Somebody who wanted to get a free ride to Manila by hiding in the toilets every time the inspectors entered the coach, was promptly caught and made to pay a hi fine.

Adobo, ice cream

The addition of a dining car in the passenger coaches became a source of much delight, especially for us who had to carefully save our pesos before our train trips so as could make at least one meal in the coach where our favorite dishes adobo and ice cream were available.

On hindsight, maybe it was not so much the food as the feeling that we were in a first class hotel that gave us that excitement of going to the dining car. The waiters were in snappy looking uniforms and were very polite. That was a thrill for us, the youth of the war that had just ended.

When the eight trips of the train became a regular feature of the Bicol Express, many of the young professionals took weekend trips to Manila for shopping, a movie or a visit to their friends and relatives in Quiapo. By Monday morning, they would be back in Legazpi.

After the birth of our youngest child in July 1966 at the Manila Doctors Hospital, we brought her home in a "deeper coach," the newest feature of the night express train.

It had four sleeping berths, double-deck on two sides, with enough space in between for getting in and out of the compartment. It was a smooth and pleasant ride for my mother-in-law, my husband, our baby girl, and me.

Means for progress

We realize now that the trains of those years were more than just a means of transporting people and goods. They were the passage to many fortunes in the future. The means for progress of our region, which even now took since again to the aftermath of a destructive typhoon.

Will the PNR become a means for a better life for Bicol again? We hope and pray for this development to our lifetime, if possible.

(Manuel Lorenzo, a medical doctor, was health officer of Legazpi City (1962-1967) and regional health director of Bicol (1968-1993). Pluvia Lorenzo is the first woman president of Bicol University (1988-1992).)

PNR at a glance

- 1877: Spanish government issues a royal decree for the construction of a railroad system in the Philippines.
- 1887: British firm Manila Railroad Company Ltd. starts construction of the 189-km Manila to Dagupan Railroad.
- March 1891: After 14 years of planning, bidding, designing and rebidding, the 44-km Manila-Dagupan railroad is finally inaugurated. The whole railway to Dagupan is completed the following year.
- Travel time from Manila to Dagupan was 3 hours and 40 minutes. There were 21 stations — the major ones that served as Tutuban, Paranaque and Tarlac.
- American Period: The Americans build about 800 km of additional tracks. In the Commonwealth era, President Manuel L. Quezon extends the railroad for the Bicol region.
- Line still operational: Tagalog-Manila to Legazpi City (474.36 km).
- Closed tracks but not operational: Manila to San Fernando, La Union.
- June 19, 1964: The Philippine National Railways is created through Republic Act 4156.
- Number of employees: 1,100 as of 2000.
- Passengers (in millions): 1982: 62; 1984: 1.6; 1986: 4.1; 1988: 2.5; 1989: 2.1.
- Budget: 1982: P250 million; 2004: P333 million.
- Gains/losses: Up until 1984, the railway system was still making money.

1982 loss (after subsidy): P610.8 million
2003 loss (after subsidy): P640.2 million

SOURCE: PHILIPPINE NATIONAL RAILWAYS; PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER RESEARCH

The grand deception

By Sen. Juan F. Enrile
Chair
Senate Blue Ribbon committee

When the railway disaster occurred in Padre Burgos, Quezon on Nov. 12 where eight died and a hundred others were injured, there were immediate calls for a congressional investigation.

Having chaired various investigations of air, land and sea disasters as chair of the Senate committee on public services, I know that immediate recommendations are hardly ever implemented by the executive department.

I decided to embark on a different approach, namely, trace the root causes of why the accident happened, probe the history rather than point the finger at anyone.

To my dismay I discovered the following: One, the President in her State of the Nation Address on July 26th this year, did not mention anything about developing or rehabilitating our railway system. Two, in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2001 to 2004, the only reference was on Metro Manila rail transit and how it could be used to decongest Metro Manila.

Three, in the MTPDP 2004 to 2010, the Northrail Project is mentioned for the first time. What this tells us is that throughout the term of the President, the railway project or rehabilitation is no government is mentioned for Bicol duma or the Bicol region.

It is therefore that in the case of the Northrail that leads to the Bicol region, there are no plans or all for rehabilitation. Over the years, the maintenance of the 474-km railroad tracks from Tutuban, Manila to Legazpi had been abandoned little by little.

Government crime

Considering the dilapidated and unusable state of the South railroad tracks, the crime of the government was to allow the PNR to run trains all the way from Tutuban to Legazpi, knowing that it was only a matter of time before a disaster would strike, and because there are no plans to rehabilitate it to be serviceable lanes.

The decisions have been made to believe that someday the Bicol Express will be restored as a mode of transportation in the Bicol region to its golden years, would be wrong, it turns out there is no such plan at all, a grand deception indeed.

The MTPDP 2004 to 2010 has over the little for rescuing systemic "Bicol, the poorest region after Mindanao," and those are the two places where the majority of labor-intensive projects are programmed throughout the term of the President.

Sin-draw

The Executive and Department of Transportation and Communications can't wait for those all the secret agencies that would say the government, particularly the National Economic and Development Authority must clarify these distorted priorities.

1. Who are the Bicol region and Mindanao not included in the MT. PDP's rail infrastructure for 2004 to 2010?

2. Conversely, why is there zero[illegible] concentration and priority for the Northrail to service the provinces north of Manila and nothing for the provinces south of Manila?

3. Why the gross and unconscionable disparity — P20 billion (2002 million) for[illegible] up a 32 km railroad line from Caloocan to Malolos, Bulacan while a measly P1.33 million annual appropriation is maintain the 474 km railroad track from Tutuban to Legazpi?

4. That means P671 million for 1 km for the Northrail while only P2[illegible] for 1 km for the South tracks. Why this unbelievable disparity? And none whatsoever for Mindanao?

(Johnny Enrile, the first executive secretary of former President Corazon Aquino, also chairs the senate public services committee and the justice and human rights committee. He was born in Naga, Camarines Sur.)

Across the NATION

Fear of meningitis strain grips Baguio

By Frank Cimatu
INQ Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center admitted four more patients suspected to be suffering from meningococcemia even as the city tried to calm residents from the panic caused by this fatal form of meningitis.

Dr. Jovita Pulan, a resident doctor of BGHMC, said three of those patients were children. Four of them, a 2-year-old, was described as "not too well," while the others, an 11-year-old and a 2-month-old infant, were still under observation. The fourth patient, a 19-year-old woman, was described by as "not too well."

The doctors refused to release the names and areas of origin of the new cases to avoid causing upsurge of meningococcemia. The disease has killed five people here this month.

Top managers about the fatal disease which have been circulating since Friday afternoon have prompted residents to exhaust the supplies of ciprofloxin and rifampicin, two potent antibiotics taken as a preventive measure against the bacterial disease.

Dr. Maria Cabotaje, director of the Department of Health's National Center for Disease Prevention and Control, said these two medicines are potent street drugs and should not be sold readily to the public.

But reports showed that as early as late Friday afternoon, almost all drug stores in the city have sold out their supplies to residents who did not have prescriptions.

Similar residents have been queuing as late as 10 p.m. on Friday, looking for these medicines in several drug stores.

"If you are not among the immediate household of those suspected cases or directly in contact with the suspected cases, then don't take the medicines," Cabotaje said.

The DOH has recorded nine deaths from suspected meningococcemia cases in Baguio and maybe La Trinidad, Benguet, since Aug. 22. With the four new cases, the suspected number of cases has now risen to 22.

Pelayo said the 19-year-old patient was just be suffering from typhoid fever but they decided to isolate her.

"The disease is not airborne and can only be transmitted through respiratory droplets like sneezes and coughing," Cabotaje said.

She said the bacteria causing the disease are endemic among 20 to 40 percent of all adults, but a lowered body resistance caused it to break out.

The BGHMC has reactivated its contagious disease pavilion, a ward I've created with the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) scare in mind last year, to receive all suspected meningococcemia cases.

Cabotaje said all cases remain "suspect" until they get the final confirmation from laboratory tests made by the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine in Metro Manila. The tests would take five days, she said. Dr. Florence Reyes, Baguio health officer, advised residents and visitors here to avoid crowded areas and to make themselves healthier.

"You should have a strong resistance to diseases). But there is no need to take medicines if you have no contact with those who have the disease. The disease is treatable and preventable," Reyes said.

Vice Mayor Peter Fay Bautista said the city has formed a response team helpdesk (24 can be reached at (074) 442-3922) to answer queries about meningococcemia. Shots will be released every 4 p.m. starting today (Sunday, Nov. 21).

Bautista said the city council would also look into the matter if they could reprimand pharmacists for selling prescription antibiotics and illustrations were spreading rumors on the disease.

Reports of the disease have created panic among citizens in the city.

Mary Bautista, dormitory manager at Teachers' Camp here, said more than 700 students, instructors and 3-star substitutes participating in a national conference sponsored by the Philippine Association of Radiologic Technologists cut short their meeting following reports on the disease.

Bautista said the conference, which started on Nov. 18, would have ended today (Sunday, Nov. 21) but organizers decided to end it on Friday night after parents called the organizers and asked reasons over their children's safety.

She said the participants started leaving Baguio at 4 p.m. Friday. The last batch of participants left the city at 9 a.m. Saturday.

However, Bautista said she did not receive similar cases/decisions from other groups holding their conferences at Teachers' Camp. In fact, she said, several other visitors arrived on Saturday. With a report from Robert Abalos, INQ Northern Luzon Bureau

A STAFF NURSE at the Baguio General Hospital checks the hospital's supply of a brand of antibiotic following a scare created by deaths from a strain of meningitis. Baguio residents and visitors had flocked to drug stores to buy the antibiotic despite advice from health officials not to panic. AFP

In The Know

MENINGOCOCCEMIA is an acute fatality-ravaged infection of the bloodstream and subsequent vascular inflammation of the blood vessels caused by the bacteria Neisseria meningitidis.

Meningococcemia is also known as meningococcal septicemia, meningococcal blood poisoning and meningococcal bacteremia or bacteria in the blood.

Causes, incidence and risk factors

Neisseria meningitidis frequently lives in the upper respiratory tract with no evidence of illness. Some event is thought to trigger the onset of aggressive behavior of the organism and sporadic cases of meningococcemia and meningococcal meningitis appear.

Family members and those closely exposed to an infected person are at increased risk. It is transmitted from person to person by respiratory droplets.

Symptoms

Symptoms may be very few at first, and can include:

- Fever
- Spotty red or purple rash
- Irritability

Later symptoms and signs can include:

- Appearing severely ill
- Changing level of consciousness
- Shock
- Large areas of hemorrhage and/or thrombosis under the skin

Treatment

Persons are often admitted to the intensive care unit of the hospital. Intensive monitoring and treatments are needed.

Wound care for thrombosed (with blood clots) areas of skin.

Respiratory isolation for first 24 hours to avoid spread of the disease to other patients.

Prevention

Prophylaxis (preventive antibiotics) for family members and contacts are often recommended. Consult health care provider about this option.

SOURCE: National Library of Medicine (NLM) website http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001309.htm

DESPAIR
George Timbreza, 49, a truck driver who works in Hacienda Luisita, wanders in the besieged sugar plantation. He said he and many of his fellow truck drivers who are from Isabela have been harassed by the military for spending until the ongoing labor conflict in the estate.

1,000 youths land jobs in govt's job generation program

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—At least 1,000 of 20,000 out-of-school youths who were targeted to be employed in the government's road maintenance program have been hired since its launch last week, said Jobs Development Secretary Luis Lorenzo Jr.

The newly hired workers were from Pampanga and Manila, Lorenzo said in the Central Luzon launch of the Oro-of-School Youths Serving Toward Economic Recovery (Oyster) and the Gabay Sa Sistik Ahensya Patin (Kuya) project here on Friday.

The Oyster is a job generation project of the Philippine Station, at Pelico while Ramos, which President Macapagal-Arroyo launched before the May 10 elections, is supervised by the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Lorenzo said the two employment projects have been merged and are now being implemented in Metro Manila, Central Luzon and Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon).

The work entails maintaining the roads, planting or removal plants and helping the police to crime prevention.

"By providing our out-of-school youths with jobs, we are reinforcing their sense of self-worth as well as helping provide valuable services to various communities," Lorenzo said.

He said his office was "acting fast on projects such as this, especially during these hard times." The youth workers will be paid the daily minimum wage.

Lorenzo said his office would also provide training and loans for small enterprises by young people.

The President has promised to create at least 1M million jobs by the end of her term in 2010.

Tonelle Dyann, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Mayor tagged gunman in broadcaster's slay

By Hector P Bargen Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Police on Friday filed a murder complaint against a town mayor in Aklan for the killing of broadcaster Herson Hinoloc.

Mayor Fred Arsenio of Lezo town, a retired soldier, was identified by a witness as the gunman who reportedly shot Hinoloc near a carinderia in Kalibo town on Nov. 13, said Supt. Dionisio Magnayon, acting Aklan police director.

"He was positively identified by the witnesses among the six photographs that are shown him," Magnayon told the Inquirer in a telephone interview.

Three more witnesses had identified Arsenio but were afraid to testify as officials, he said.

He said the mayor also "motivated" the arrest shortly after the gunman based on the descriptions of witnesses who were near the carinderia during the shooting.

Arsenio denied the accusation.

"My conscience would not allow that. Why would I risk my position by killing Hinoloc? I am innocent," he said in a radio interview.

He asked the police to "examine the mental condition of the witness" who pinpointed him.

Hours after the murder complaint was filed at the Aklan Provincial Prosecutor's Office, policemen under the Task Force Hinoloc searched Arsenio's residence at the poblacion of Lezo town, another Kalibo town of Kalibo.

The search was based on a warrant issued by Executive Judge Marietta Honorata Aldecoa of the Aklan Regional Trial Court.

The 20-member team, however, failed to find the .45-cal. pistol believed to have been used in Hinoloc's killing or other weapons in Arsenio's residence.

Magnayon, who heads the task force, said the mayor was "cooperative" during the four-hour search that ended around 10:30 p.m.

The 32-year-old witness said he first heard four shots that he mistook as firecracker explosions before he saw somebody being pushed by a man holding a gun.

He said he saw the face of the gunman whom he later identified as Arsenio when the gunman stopped and fell while pursuing the unarmed broadcaster.

"He (gunman) was around five meters away from me when he looked up after picking up his gun," the witness told Border Radyo.

The witness again saw the gunman's face when the latter went to a waiting motorcycle driven by an accomplice.

After the suspect sped off, the witness said he tried to follow them aboard his motorcycle.

But he proceeded to the police station after the suspects flagged him down.

"Sir, (gunman) looked familiar but I did not know who he really was then," said the witness, who has been placed under police protection.

Hinoloc, earlier said Thursday, had received more than two death threats from persons or groups angered by his commentaries.

Hinoloc was the station manager of the dyIS Border Radyo in Kalibo. He also hosted a morning program "Bombo Radyo Bigtime."

Officials in Lezo, the mayor's hometown, said Hinoloc had criticized Arsenio in his program for frequenting cockpit joints and for allegedly not paying his electricity bills.

On 6 Oct. said Hinoloc would often take a swipe at the mayor during the broadcaster's program early this year.

Arsenio is a former master sergeant in the Army under the 47th Infantry Battalion.

Suspect says search for weapons in his house was an 'injustice'

By Rocio I. Wahid
PDI Visayas Bureau

LEZO, Aklan—A visibly surprised Mayor Fred Arsenio of Lezo town was having a round of drinks with some guests when members of the task force searched his house on Friday.

"I'm totally innocent [of] the accusations made by [the late] radio broadcaster in my hometown [Lezo] where the incident happened," he told reporters while task force members combed every nook and cranny of his home in search of a .45 cal. pistol believed to be the murder weapon used by the killer of broadcaster Herson Hinoloc.

Minutes later, the task force failed to find anything. Arsenio said this was expected since he did not keep any weapon in his home.

Arsenio said he was shocked to see task force members swoop down on his residence and inform him of the murder charges filed against him, on Friday afternoon at the provincial prosecutor's office.

"I appeal to the authorities that they carefully check the veracity of the claims made by this so-called witness. This is a clear case of mistaken identity. This is a great injustice on my part that could cause irreparable damage to me and my family," Arsenio told reporters.

He said that he could not gamble his career by personally shooting and killing Hinoloc in front of many people in the carinderia.

Hours after the Nov. 13 slay, Arsenio came to the defense of Arsenio, a political ally, saying he and the mayor saw each other at a wake in Lezo at the time that Hinoloc was shot.

"There were a lot of people who saw the mayor attending a wake during [that time at Lezo so how can he possibly be the one to kill Hinoloc]? Don't you think he will sacrifice his position, embarrass his constituents?" Quinto asked.

Arsenio had been a subject of Hinoloc's stinging commentaries when he was still a councilor.

One of the issues raised against him was his zero payment of power bills in the Aklan Electric Cooperative and his frequent presence in cockpit arenas in the province, which were likely denied by the mayor.

'Unding' cuts off power in Bicol region

LEGAZPI CITY—Typhoon "Unding" continued to wreak havoc in the Bicol region, toppling the main power of the National Power Corp. and leaving the entire region without electricity late Friday.

The damage could take up to three days to repair, according to Napocor officials.

They said the main tower supporting the power line that connects all the region's provinces to the main power supply.

The officials, however, assured consumers they were acting on the damage and were doing everything to restore power as soon as possible.

In Naga City, the Department of Agriculture reported that at least 1944 million worth of high value crops, livestock and fishery resources were destroyed.

Emergency meeting

The regional disaster coordinating council (RDCC) and the provincial disaster coordinating council (PDCC) held an emergency meeting at the Camarines Sur provincial capitol.

According to the RDCC, four fishermen from Sabang and Calabanga towns and a still undetermined number of fishermen in the Bagac Gulf were reported missing.

Damage was brought by Unding triggered flooding and landslides in the inland province of Catanduanes and left 2,750 passengers stranded in four terminals and seaports across Bicol, according to the Office of the Civil Defense.

OCD Bicol regional director Al ard Cepdi said a report from the Catanduanes Engineering Division Office to the Department of Public Works and Highways regional office here said the approaches to the Dupanggatan Bridge in San Miguel and the San Vicente Bridge in Cagraray Carangcanas were washed out by flood waters.

Impassable

The Catanduanes Disaster Coordinating Council also reported that floods rendered the Panoan Spillway in San Andres, Catanduanes impassable in all types of vehicles while all river crossings were also flooded.

Cepdi quoted DPWH reports saying the rains brought by the typhoon triggered three episodes of landslides in Km 22 in Bato-Bagamel town, Km 23 in Baras and Km 144 in Buhi'o, Camarines—all in Catanduanes.

The Philippine Coast Guard stationed in several ports across the region already banned unseaworthy watercraft from crossing the rough seas.

The Department of Education had suspended classes in the elementary and secondary levels.

The rains didn't stop in Camarines Sur, leading to more floods.

Phone lines also were down as a result of strong winds whipped up by Unding.

As of early yesterday officials said at least 80 percent of lines along the highway between Naga City and Oli rowers were uprooted by the typhoon's strong winds.

The typhoon main building have suffered damages.

Thousands have been stranded as a result of the typhoon following the Coast Guard's decision to prevent vessels from sailing out to sea. Ad Bacsasen and Alan Peloyo, PDI Contributors Lemar Barcia

ONSLAUGHT

A fisherman tries to save his boat being battered by strong winds from typhoon "Unding" in Sorsogon, Camarines Sur. Unding is the strongest storm of the year, considered the poorest in Camarines Sur.

Tortured Filipino maid lands in Kuwaiti hospital

RAZAQ CITY—A 24-year-old Filipino maid is now in a Kuwaiti hospital where she is being treated for a fractured skull and other serious injuries, a Filipino staff member in that hospital told the Inquirer.

The source, who called the Inquirer from Kuwait on Nov. 11 and Nov. 18, said medical examinations showed that the skull of Alma Bulanadoz Bellbrez suffered internal bleeding as a result of the fractures.

Bellbrez's skin was scraped or bruised and its marks were found at her body. Each of her heels had deep round wounds. "Like the Philippine jaws coin," said the source.

"After first seeing what happened to her, I couldn't sleep the whole night," the source said. "What happened to her calls for justice."

She said that Bon, said to be a native of Mindanao, arrived in Kuwait on Aug. 8 and was admitted on the Al Sabah General Hospital on Nov. 13.

Bellbrez's recruitment agency promised her no overseas love to the employer, but failed, the source said.

The source urged the Philippine government through its embassy in Kuwait to investigate Bellbrez's case and to seek justice for her.

"There are other undocumented cases of Filipino maids who have ended up in various orthopedic and mental hospitals and rehabilitation centers here," the source said.

The country has become a major exporter of manpower as a result of the government's failure to create jobs for a growing labor force.

Complaints of abuses have swamped the government's manpower deployment agencies and many have not been acted upon.

Dozens of Filipinos who worked as maids in foreign countries end up being beaten up, tortured or killed but the exodus of Filipino women working jobs abroad continues because of the sheer lack of gainful employment in the country.

The most recently published case of a Filipino overseas worker's ordeal was that of Angelo de la Cruz, who was abducted in Iraq by insurgents who had threatened to behead him if the government did not withdraw its non-combat military personnel from Iraq.

The government relented and De la Cruz was freed. Maurice Malonzo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

INQUIRER Mindanao

Editor Joe Bandanyel
Senior Chief Nilca A. Alcantara

Interview with a photojournalist

(Editor's note: This story is based on unpublished interviews with Gene Boyd shortly after his arrival from the by-invitation-only "Asia-Europe Young Photographers Forum" in Amsterdam.)

By Dennis Jay C. Santos
Inquirer City

IT'S LIKE falling in love, you never know when it comes to you," Gene Boyd Lumawag always said each time someone asked him how he managed to take striking photos.

When he was once asked him the same question, Gene Boyd, 26, was animated and full of life as he explained his photos, which were part of an exhibit in a mall here early this year.

He had just returned from a conventions in mountains, which was attended by about 20 photojournalists from Asia and Europe. He was the only Filipino invited to the affair.

But from Boyd, himself, winning his prizes as "Fluency," said he was just lucky to be there.

"I brought some of my best work and some of my worst documentaries," he said.

Looking at his work, one could only surmise that a highly trained professional was behind it.

"Beautiful eyes" is a phrase coined for photographers known for their moving, dramatic and aesthetic approach. Surely, one could say Rodney had those assets.

Asked how he came in love his work with such a passion, Gene Boyd always said that it was his father, Nilsing Boyd, also a known photographer and photo editor of local newspaper Sun Star Davao, who taught him to be like that.

"I was first trained by my father so he is likewise (photo) processing or film man)," he said.

Gene Boyd said he was nine when a photo of his was first published.

The photo was shot with the guidance of his father.

During his adolescent years, he was already shooting photos for local newspapers, international media outlets and the boycott's Mindanao threats.

His colleagues considered him one of the most courageous journalists covering the Mindanao war in 2000.

Asked if there were rivalry between him and his father, Gene Boyd said: "I don't really compete with him. He is good, but we are different."

Gene Boyd won several awards, including the prestigious Catholic Mass Media Award in 2000.

"But I want to develop my knowledge further," he said.

Asked what was keeping him going and loving his job despite its "low and often frustrating" compensation, he said: "It doesn't really matter if you earn a million pesos a month or P1.9 a day, as long as I squeeze the shutter and put my eye at the camera's viewfinder," he said.

Goodbye, Gene Boyd

(Editor's note: The following is a poem written for Gene Boyd by one of his friends, Inquirer correspondent Christina Godinez Ortega)

The cold fire in the sky has set
taking you along,
into what must about that perfect
playtime at a tide maple color
where foreign boats had docked,
the glorious years marked
by smiling Davao women and their
heaven.
His screams opened then
from the land of vitrian,
of quick hands that fished,
chained yellow petals from the sea,
a people's pride for a town
hit by fire after fire
rising again, again.
Yet, we know
life knows there can't be measure
to the shadowy sins stalking your about
for having taken it all
cursed learning in your eyes
the framed glowing fire
only the mind can own.
No one could've guessed
how fated your life
can that log had at another time
the shining sun on your back,
and later soaking up as the Pipes,
Talandig children dancing
before your polished lens
magical incense in the shadow
of Dangalan.
As we grow old, new hours
Will dark again
in that strange pier away from home
your young blood's runoff
seeking the indifferent sea
you have escaped the tyranny of time—
We do not find anger in your wake.

—Christina G Godinez Ortega,
Nov. 14, 2004, Digos City

Remembering Gene Boyd

By Germelina Lacorte

DUGONG MINDANAW

EVERYBODY else had left the noisy dining table, where we spent time talking about books one day, when Gene Boyd came back with questions.

"I don't understand you people," he said, the usual scowl on his face, "Why are you so crazy about having your copies signed? Why on earth would someone prefer old books only because they're filling by dead authors to hand over your freaking's money?"

I paused. Not to be a wimp, so, instead of answering his questions, I spun a tale about a great painter whose sketches and drawings and what would have passed for trash were sought out long after he died.

"There's something about greatness that makes you want to cling to it long after it's gone," I said, trying to roll my eyes Gene Boyd-style. "In the end, we are often left scavenging for the imprints and marks of those who left us behind."

"Hm. mmm—?" This was Boyd again, raising his brows, rolling his eyes and muttering. "Hm. never would guess what was on his mind.

"Yes," I said. "And in case of photographs..."

For a moment, I saw a flicker of interest in his eyes.

"If you're a photographer of some renown, your signed copies will surely be more valuable than the unsigned ones."

I don't know what hit him as soon as I said this because he turned around, opened the steel drawers and reached for a couple of what I thought were postcards with the millennium stamps on the cover.

(As an honorary photographer at the turn of the millennium, he took photos of what would have been the country's first top-of-the-light at Punta Point in Sinangay Santiago, Caraga, Davao Oriental—the easternmost part of the country. But that "first sunrise" never rose. It rained.)

"Uh, c'mon, Boyd," I said, willing a laugh. I preferred his other shots—those that captured stark images of Mindanao, the poignant lines in the landscape he extensively covered. "You have other good shots to show me."

But he did not hear me then. He was already writing something on the card. After a while, in the awkward manner of somebody unskilled at "the Future, he handed the card to me. "There," Gene Boyd said. "When I [become] a famous photographer someday you will find yourself staring at this card."

The sun was blazing outside that day I did not have the heart to ask him then.

On Nov. 12, a Friday, Gene Boyd was shot after taking photographs of the contest in Cotabato. Seeing his face in the newspaper, I thought, this must be one of those jokes Gene Boyd loved to play. How could somebody so alive, be suddenly snapped out of life in a flash?

I found myself staring at the card with the millennium number on it, for never.

Things dawned on me very, very slowly.

He was the ninth journalist to have died this year, the 59th since democracy was restored in 1986, according to the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines (NUJP). I saw his name on the Internet, in the newspapers, even on memorials and photographs, and toward something was amiss, something was out of place.

Then, I found out what it was. Gene Boyd was already out there, instead of here, covering stories with us.

'Crumbs don't make feast'

saying she had yet to see a document showing that the pork barrel funds were restored.

"The truth is that I have yet to see that provision [in the general appropriations bill. The PDAF [in the budget bill] remains the same, it was not increased," she said.

"As far as I know, they have a plan to make a realignment [of funds] because they cannot increase the budget. As a pending shot is not acceptable [to Malacañang]," Ston could added.

She said that until such time that additional revenues were collected, the government could not afford to increase the budget, including restoring the full amount of the PDAF.

With the proposed P907.8 billion national budget for 2005 and Presidential Management Secretary Joe Mucay Andaya's promise to cut measures will pending in the House, Malacañang has opted to focus on the realignment of funds now, apparently taking care not to antagonize the congressmen.

"We're not commenting on this issue unless it is really final and brought in to the political forum. This is a sensitive issue of legislative that will still have to be discussed," said Communications Undersecretary Silvestre Afable.

Afable said that only when Congress had reached a consensus to restore their pork barrel funds would the matter be brought up to the political leadership and discussed with economic managers."

Line-item budgeting

In the House, Andaya explained that when the congressmen allocated their P70 million pork barrel funds, lump-sum pork barrel 'system' which will be replaced by the line-item budgeting system starting with the 2005 General Appropriations Act.

Solomon, however, opted to disagree with Andaya. It said the House decision to cut down their pork barrel in the 2005 budget and instead to stick to their earlier pledge to give up on slash their pork barrel by 50 percent.

Sen. Richard Gordon yesterday said the Senators also except for those who pledged to give up their entire pork barrel of about P300 million each, most senators had agreed in principle to slash their pork by half next year.

"We are not insensitive to the plight of the poor constituents," said Gordon, noting that the ballooning budget deficit of the cash-strapped Arroyo administration had reached P3 billion.

Gordon said the voluntary reduction of their pork barrel funds was a personal decision on the part of senators.

At least four senators will give up their pork for next year. They are Senate President Franklin Drilon, Joker Arroyo, Panfilo Lacson and Alfredo Lim. Drilon plans to give up half of it.

'Few wayward' legislators

Bonoodin, who as budget chief oversees the PDAF allocations for pet projects of legislators, said the had personally monitored the spending of the pork barrel and she believed there were only a "few wayward" legislators.

She was apparently referring to allegations that some lawmakers awarded themselves by getting kickbacks from contractors who win substitutes their pork barrel projects.

Bonoodin said the Arroyo administration had "limited" the uses for the pork barrel, which in the past had been spent on waiting sheds and basketball courts, to five purposes: livelihood assistance, education and scholarship, water supply, and electrification and health.

Strict guidelines will also be implemented on how the pork barrel would be spent for those purposes, for instance, health or hospitalization expenses can only be given to indigent patients.

"To whomever, this is only for poor students. You cannot give a scholarship to a child of a republic family, definitely not to someone going to a private school," Bonoodin said.

Crisis 'lessened'

Despite the House move, Bonoodin remained hopeful the House would not restore the 40-percent cut in the pork barrel proposed by Malacañang when it submits the proposed 2005 budget to Congress.

Bonoodin also stressed that the President did not say that the fiscal crisis was over, only that the fiscal difficulties of "crisis proportions" had been lessened.

"For me, the country still need all the help it can get. Its current crisis is to be completed. We are doing everything to improve the fiscal resources of our country," Bonoodin said.

Bonoodin said Malacañang was doubtful that no tax Congress had approved these year will generate revenues proposed by the President to raise more revenues to cover the budget deficit and finance key projects of the government.

Rep. Sulpicio Asi Barbers (Lakas, Isangani Bayan) said that was unfair to blame lawmakers and their projects for the country's fiscal problems.

"Pork barrel is a mere drop in the bucket," Barbers said, adding that it was the "primary engine of development in the countryside."

Rep. Emilio Ramon Mejia Party-list group opposes the pork barrel but still intends to use the funds if it is restored.

Tool of Malacañang

"Pork barrel is a source of corruption and a tool used by Malacañang to control Congress," said Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño but he admitted that there time would unhide the fund.

"Since it would be there, we might as well use it for programs like educational and health assistance," Casiño said.

Meanwhile, many lawmakers welcomed the full restoration of the pork barrel.

Pet projects

Gordon said that senators wanted the restoration for pursuit of their pork barrel to push for pet projects such as, in his case, hospitals, schools, creation of new jobs and infrastructure development to boost tourism.

"This issue is not [the Committee of the] pork barrel but the transparency and the manner for which it is used," said Gordon. "If we take out pork barrel now, where is it going to go? Who will use it? How will you [Gov 87" He noted that pork barrel funds were particularly needed by impoverished provinces that could not get funding through the national budget.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. wants "pork holders" compelled by law how budgeting to identify their projects.

Pimentel said the line item budgeting should be adopted in view any suspicion of misuse or irregularities.

In the proposed shift to line item budgeting, all projects, including those intended to be funded by the PDAF, would be identified through the GAA, he said.

Transparency

"So there is transparency from the beginning, and proponents are forced to defend their pork amount and its purpose. Only then can pork be justified before their peers and eventually before their people," said Pimentel.

Through this budgeting process, Pimentel said the public would readily know the projects being funded by the pork barrel funds of lawmakers, how much was allocated for each project, who were the recipients and its location.

'In the bounds of secrecy'

Pimentel said line item budgeting should also apply to the pork barrel of the President, Vice President, Cabinet officers and heads of agencies.

Considered pork barrel funds of the President are the President's social fund, contingent fund, confidential fund and other discretionary fund, and Malacañang's "hidden in the bounds of secrecy" of the GAA.

Authors in denial, stand by error-filled history book

agreed that the textbook, Isaac Tioson, Spanish or as Hinabaang, used by second year high school students for the last 12 years was filled with errors.

The authors and publisher, however, are still in denial.

Last week, one of the authors, Ruth Fuentes, filed a libel case in Muntinlupa against Marian School executive Antonio Go.

Last month, the textbook's lead author, Teodoro Agoncillo, filed a libel case in Quezon City against Go, who circulated comments in Ayala's review in a newspaper ad last Sept. 29.

In their separate but similar complaints, Fuentes and Fuentes said the tweets that Go posted out were "inaccurate and untruthful."

Criminals, idiots

They said Go's ad titled "Invisible Crime" portrayed the authors as "criminals" and "idiots" to have allowed such textbook to be used in school.

"The said statements Go's quoted are malicious as it brands the authors as criminals and impute to them imagined and untruthful errors," they said in their complaint.

Go had to appear separately at the hearings before the Muntinlupa and Quezon City prosecutor's offices.

Most shocked Department of Education officials that she would "close her name."

Ayala was also authored by Evelina Villanueva and the late Bernardino Dimayo.

Officials of Vibal Publishing House, which supplied Ayala some 7,000 public and private schools, had also denied that they contributed any wrongdoing.

"Victims of circumstances'

"Nobody is at fault. We're all victims of circumstances," Vibal Group Atty. Mark Bryan said in an interview Thursday.

Vibal officials grudgingly acknowledged the historians' verdict, but did not want their textbook described as "error-filled."

"It is not as bad as it is projected [in the media]," Mark Bryan said.

But they could not explain why the errors were not corrected in subsequent editions since 1993.

"You can only do so much in a textbook. It's very difficult to write a textbook," Mark Bryan said.

Vibal officials refused to pull the textbook out, saying it still had some value as a teaching tool.

The prosecutors now teaching notes next month and to come up with a revised edition before the start of the new school year.

Authors' credentials

Vibal officials also defended the authors' credentials. Fuentes is a retired superintendent of the Department of Education." Fuentes is a supervisor at the Deped Bataan and Capital Region; Villoria is an assistant superintendent at Deped Manila, while the late Quirey was a school principal.

Vibal said Vitar, Fuentes and Villoria headed Deped Bataan department.

Elen Mabaan, Vibal's assistant book development manager, said the authors received honoraria same as with his request in the media.

"The authors are open to (checking the) errors," but they question how the issue was brought up. Instead of contacting them, [Go] went to the media," Mabaan said.

Words-is-lower ignored

Vibal failed to mention that Go had been calling the Deped's and the publisher's attention to typo since 2001.

In fact, he has been calling attention to errors on textbooks since 1997.

After Go's Sept. 29 repeat, historians and history teachers reviewed Ayala and found substantial errors throughout the 324-page textbook used by second-year high school students.

The Deped, which approved and promoted the textbook for use in public high schools, has asked 22 historians to review the entire chapters of the textbook.

Substantial errors

Historian Sarmenio Flaviano cited said the textbook's errors were more substantial than those in typically of thought, and acknowledged Go for his complaint.

The National Book Development Board also concluded that the textbook was "substandard" and requires with errors.

NBDB chair Dr. Benito Gonzales, who reviewed the book, found errors and misinterpretations in the textbook's discussion of Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

The NBDB said Vibal last week to immediately pull the textbook out of private schools and to radically revise it before introducing it again.

But Vibal found this recommendation "too radical."

Clash of egos: 'Big 3' versus 'Solid 7' at ABS-CBN TV

groups, says the source. The two top network executives on one side, and seven officers of the network's entertainment group led by SVP for Entertainment and former actress Charo Santos-Concio, on the other.

The Big 3 refers to network chair Gabby Lopez, president Eric Alejandro, and chief alleged "Another man," Shoeller Ilusen, the network's SVP for business development.

The Solid 7 is the Santos-Concio group leadership, all seven of whom have gone on leave. Santos-Concio went on leave more than three weeks ago, according to sister the network employees.

Shoeller Julienji Shoeller, SVP for Talent Development and Management Operations, is said to have not only gone on leave but to said to have resigned and sent his letter to the personnel department that he would be "available" to direct soaps and movies like he used to do, one insider said.

Joy Lumbao, assistant to Manahan, said last Friday Manahan was on "indefinite leave" and that "anyone dropping by the office is not to see."

Manahan was in the ABS-CBN premises, but refused to speak with Inquirer International. VP for Talk and Variety Ben Tulfo, friend, however, sent a text message that stated: "I'm sorry I don't have any official word on it. Thank you and I hope you understand."

Show of sympathy

The source that the Solid 7 made were a show of sympathy for Santos-Concio and a protest against top management, specifically the Big 3, according to the first insider. Most of those who went on leave were expected to be back at work after the weekend, the insider said.

Among those who showed the supposed resignation of Santos-Concio, Manahan, Ilusen, SVP for TV Productions Cory Vidanes, VP for Talent Development Marichu Alberto, SVP for Drama Production and Star Cinema Malou Santos and VP for Drama Production and Star Cinema Olivia Lamasan as "reclusive upheaval" at ABS-CBN.

The source said Santos-Concio decided to quit after she received a recording from ABS-CBN chair Gabby Lopez. "The others went on 'sympathy' strike," the source said.

The rift in show biz circles had it that relationship between Lopez and Santos-Concio started for the worse after Lopez appointed Manahan to ABS-CBN president.

"I just found out that there is actually a strike against Gabby Lopez," the source said. "They went in a company party, and he was smoking Cheers, telling her last

injured.

They promised to issue coaching notes next month and to come up with a revised edition before the start of the new school year.

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Even GMA can't intervene in UP president election

ESPINTA

- All 12 regents—including the chair Fr. Rolando de la Rosa OP head of the Commission on Higher Education—are voting.
- A nominee should have at least seven votes to be declared the next president.

The board session of seven ex-officio members and two Malacañang appointees.

The Palace appointees are Filomeno Sevilla, Silliman Mendiola, Melo Gonzales, Fatima Bautista and retired Supreme Court Justice Abraham Sarmiento.

The ex-officio members are Go in favor, Chair, Nemenzo, vice chair; Sen. Juan Flavier, chair of the Sen. ate committee on education; Rep. Cynthia Villar, chair of the House committee on education; Prof. Ernesto Cu, faculty representative; Gen. Jaime de los Santos, alumni representative; and Mayra Dumaraos de los Reyes, student representative.

ROMAN

Officer-in-charge

In 1958, when it was unable to break a similar deadlock, the BOR appointed an officer-in-charge who served as president for the next two years.

According to Gregorio, UP alumni shudder when they recall the turmoil caused by the lack of a university president.

It was believed to be the first time that student demonstrations were held at UP with the students demanding that the BOR make a decision once and for all.

NBI busts fake dollar syndicate

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation has busted an alleged counterfeiting syndicate with the arrest of three suspected distributors and the seizure of some $17 billion in fake US dollars and treasury bills in a recent raid.

Also confiscated during the raid of two Appleton clothing

[illegible] notes in Pasay City were computers and printers believed to have been used in making the fake bills.

Those arrested were identified as Carlos Tiong, 50, of Ideciation Street in Manila; Ronald Bertillo, 28, of Appleton Suites; and Arnulfo Bebero, 21, of Burlington City.

The raid was conducted by members of the NBI's Anti-Graft Division (AGD) following reports of illegal trading and faking of foreign currency in Pasay City.

AGD chief Manuel Edrano said that after conducting investigation, AGD agents applied for and were given search warrants by Judge Francisco Mendiola to enter Tiong's two Appleton Suites units on Tillamook Street in Pasay City.

After obtaining the warrants, the AGD operatives also conducted a buy-bust operation that led to Tiong's arrest in Bebero when he met with an undercover agent to sell 5 million denominated Euro-size bills.

Soon after, the NBI raided the Appleton Suites units and discovered the fake US dollars and treasury bonds along with the computer and printers. The items were valued at $17,060,000,000.

Serdiña and Bebero were also arrested in the same operation.

Complaints of raids, forging treasury and bank notes, and manufacturing and possessing implements for falsification have been filed against the three suspects.

QC battles colorum tricycles

By Tina G. Santos

TO ME the city seems of colorum tricycles, the Quezon City government will impose stiffer penalties for drivers and operators caught illegally operating in the city.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte said colorum tricycle units would be apprehended starting next month. The city council has already approved an ordinance penalizing unauthorized tricycle operations.

Belmonte said he already instructed Tricycle Regulatory Unit (TRU) chief Manuel De Toledo to implement the ordinance, which also imposes longer periods of impoundment for colorum units.

Under the ordinance, violators' units would be impounded for five days on their first offense; 10 days on the second, and 15 days on the third. On each offense, violators would be fined P5,000.

TRU officials say an estimated 8,000 units of colorum tricycles ply the city's streets with impunity.

Metro residents face prospect of stinking Christmas

By Leigh A. del Puerto

IT WILL be smelling anything but Christmas if the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) fails to settle some P300 million in dues for the use of the Rodriguez dump in Rizal.

The MMDA owes the Rizal town P48 million in fees for using the Montalban Solid Waste Disposal Facility (MSWDF), town officials said.

Also, they added, the agency needs to pay International Hauler Inc., the contractor for the 14 hectare landfill, P119 million.

According to officials, the amount totalling some P168 million represents unpaid dues from January to November this year.

Due to the missed payments, the town is now poised to bar the MMDA from using the MSWDF on Dec 1.

Garbage from seven cities and two towns in Metro Manila end up in the facility.

Rodriguez Mayor Pedro Desjo has written MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando to warn him of the impending closure.

"We regret to inform you that starting Dec. 1, 2004, the MMWDF will temporarily close its operations as waste disposal site of the Authority," Desjo said in his letter, a copy of which was obtained by the Bulletin.

Desjo said the town's operations had been crippled by the non-payment of dues.

Already, salaries of some of its contractual workers have been delayed and several projects put on hold, the mayor pointed out.

"Should the MMDA not pay up, Desjo said the town would be hard put to give its employees their 13th month pay.

The mayor said he understood the inconvenience that the closure may cause Metro Manila residents. However, he said, they had tried everything to avoid arriving at the painful decision.

"We only want what is due us," the mayor said. "During the garbage crisis, we opened up our town as garbage city. Some said I put my political career at stake. We cooperated with the national government. But now that there is no crisis... it seems they have forgotten us."

"Now I am pleading for them to help us," he said.

Garcia said a two- or three-month delay would have been tolerable, but six months was simply too much.

Half of Rodriguez's total budget of P140 million comes from the tipping fees that the town gets from the landfill's use.

The MSWDF was opened after a garbage crisis hit the metropolis from 1999 to 2001, when the then Metro Secretary Lina[illegible] was forced to close.

BALINESE ROOF SHAKES
(Do you want an Asian design for your house?)

More homebuilders are now turning their eyes on Balinese roofing materials to capture the beauty of the grains, hills and breaks of Southeast Asia.

Some call this design [illegible] style.

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Quezon City [illegible] Simply Creative

Civilians to help vs crime

SOME 200 volunteers have been deployed in the Manila shopping district to help policemen keep crime there at a minimum.

The volunteers, mostly village watchmen, will be patrolling Rizal Avenue, the LRT and MRT stations, and shopping centers in the area. Leila B. Salaverria

A Statement of Concern

RESPECT AND DEFEND THE INTEGRITY OF THE UNIVERSITY

The quest for the next President of the University of the Philippines has come down to a dead heat between Ambassador and former banker Edgardo Espiritu and the UP Diliman Chancellor Dr. Emerlinda Roman. The summary report from the Secretary of the Board of Regents indicates that another meeting will be held on Monday, November 22, to break the 6-6 tie.

We look forward to that meeting with both hope and apprehension-hope, because we have not lost faith in the power of fair play to prevail; apprehension, because we foresee that all manner of political pressure will be exerted by outside forces on a matter so vital to the University and its integrity.

While we were not privy to the closed-door deliberations and the ballotings of the BOR that led to the reported deadlock, we can only surmise that all 12 Regents cast their votes to produce the tie.

Given this scenario, it disturbs us, first of all, that Regents who failed to participate in the extensive process of consultations and interviews, or even in previous deliberations of the Board on the UP Presidency, apparently could not find the delicadeza to inhibit themselves from voting.

It disturbs us further to learn from credible sources that enormous pressure has been brought to bear on Regents who may have decided to follow their conscience and their good judgment rather than the maxims of powerful politicians. We applaud and salute those Regents for their moral courage and for standing their ground despite propaganda strenuously and prematurely proclaiming "a landslide victory" for the favored candidate.

We certainly believe in opening the University to new knowledge, new talent, and new ideas and opportunities, which is the only way a modern university can survive and prosper. This is why we are seeking a new dynamic leadership that will steer the University into its second century. But these changes must arise and develop organically within the academic community-not as impositions from above, achieved through sheer political power.

Academic life is distinguished from the tawdriness of everyday politics precisely by the practice of critical inquiry and informed judgment. Vital issues require intelligent and vigorous discussion, anchored on values and ideals held dearly by the University community.

It is an affront to that intellectual tradition for such momentous decisions as the choice of the University President to be arrived at so casually by some Regents either now, often, or indifferent to the processes and traditions of the University.

We recognize that, as a public institution, the University is accountable for its actions and decisions to the country's elected leadership. Conversely, however, a responsible leadership or its representatives should also be accountable to the University and the nation for its choices especially as they affect the University itself.

As the prime molder of our youth and our intellectual future, the University of the Philippines must be unlike other government agencies in which leaders with no academic experience and distinction can be appointed as political rewards and favors. As an intellectual meritocracy, the University should be the last place to be ruled by patronage politics, which we resoundingly reject.

We pray that the honorable Regents bear this in mind when they resume their deliberations on Monday-that they vote with the enduring interests of the University and the nation at heart, and find the courage and the wisdom to unite with the community in respecting and defending the integrity of the University.

Now is the time for men and women of character to be counted. We hope that the Regents of our beloved University do not fail us in this hour of greatest need.

JOSE V. ABUEVA
Former President
University of the Philippines

EMMANUEL V. SORIANO
Former President
University of the Philippines

OSCAR M. ALFONSO
Former Regent
UP Board of Regents

VICTOR A. REYES
Former Regent
UP Board of Regents

ERNESTO G. TANSENGCO
Former Chancellor
UP Diliman and
Former Regent, UP Board of Regents

ERNESTO D. DOMINGO
Former Chancellor
UP Manila and
Former Regent, UP Board of Regents

RAUL P. DE GUZMAN
Former Chancellor
UP Los Baños and
Former Regent, UP Board of Regents

ROGER POSADAS
Former Chancellor
UP Diliman

[illegible] ABAD
University President
College of Arts & Letters
UP Diliman

NAPOLEON V. ARIEVA
National Artist

METRO

Edna Ezra G. Dizon
Assistant Editor Carmen B. Bitoy

STCM: Landmark school lives again

By Angelina G. Gulay

"Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing. God alone is unchanging. His love attains everything. God alone suffices."

—Mrs. Teresa de Avila, Doctor of the Catholic Church

FOR HEADS' 25 years, alumnae of St. Theresa's College, Manila (STCM), have used this day (the school closed, after the last batch graduated in 1980, the landmark that is SSS San Marcelino Street) has stood as a relic from an era whence good education was every parent's aspiration.

And until every homecoming homes held on their own grounds, the yearning for home, the desire to continue its legacy intensified.

Quixotic dream

So thought emboldened by three patron saint's months, Theresians are now embarking on what had once seemed a quixotic dream: the rebuilding of their alma mater.

Now and when did this fund wish begin to take form?

In February 2003, while Anna Maria "Mia" Tan-Dello and some 15 '70 batch mates were shooting the breeze here after their successful silver jubilee program, the question popped up again: What if STCM reopened?

This time, the question did not fade away into the night. Poking up the confidence-boosting bowl of PCTV, which was then functioning out of the ITC Quezon City grounds and into a hotel ballroom, Mia's batch decided the time was ripe for exploring possibilities.

'Would anyone come?'

"If we opened the school, would anyone come?" Mia's had mused.

Then might even have to lose them back," quips the optimistic style of a classmate's mother, Angelina Makalintan, an educator who was as well have been the voice of an angel hearing a sure sage from heaven.

Thus Project Phoenix came into being. Its name STCM "Rises Forever" like the mythical bird symbolizing immortality.

Preparations quickly found an ally in Susie Gan-Rocha, then president of the St. Theresa's Alumnae Association (STAA), through whose leadership Mia's group was able to reach out to the senior batches.

The "elders" on the STAA board were receptive, advising them that to close any legal obstacles to using the name of the school, which is synonymous with academic excellence and social consciousness.

More consultations followed, with teachers, educators officials, school administrators, other religious congregations and, yes, the STCM nuns. Prepared to hear rejection, the project team received assurances "literally a word of encouragement. The wounds inflicted by the schools closure had healed.

Recalling the momentous meeting last December with Sister Myrna Fronda, head of the STCM Philippine District team, at the ITC DC compound, Mia said, "Susie went straight to the chapel, walked up to the altar and went down on her knees in thanksgiving."

The last month, who should come for a visit than the Belgian STCM Mother General, Anne Clement? Taking their cue in her, Susie explained that "the only way we Theresians can help our country is through the mission of education."

Continuing the mission

Sister Anne was pleased with the alumnae's initiative, noting that part of the STCM vision was precisely to train lay people to continue the mission of the religious.

"A school is a stabilizing factor in society," said Mia, who has had 20 years of experience in NGO work, mostly through the family's Elena Tan Foundation. The solution to our nation's problems lies in education, she said, and STCM would be part of that solution.

As Today columnist (and one of Mother Redemptor's kindergarten boys) Dan Watkins once reminded, "STCM would have been the fountain of a strong middle class."

Now sits

The fountain will run on a new site, most likely in burgeoning Taguig, where it can serve middle-class families from Bonifacio, Batangas and Makati as well. The academics committee headed by respected educator Wela Torres-Bolivar is preparing the teaching curricula, and for June 2006, the new STCM will open its doors initially to Kinder, Prep, and Grades 1...3 and 5 pupils.

Former nuns may want to come and help, Mia's said. "Nuns who might be too old to teach have asked if they could just sit with the children and tell them stories."

The immediate task is to generate resources, and for Thursday's reunion is intended to get the ball rolling. While donations are urgently needed, it won't be a pledging session, stressed Marites Fronda. Support does not come only in the form of money.

Thursday reunion

In a reunion this Thursday at the Black Wash Golf & Country Club, they will launch the STCM Foundation that will see this dream come into fruition.

"It will be an occasion for not wishing, as we hope to tap the Theresian professional pool," said Miss Julia Sia.

The mood will be informal and nostalgic, as not be the event's title, "A Theresian Jubilo-cafe: Let's Lapu-lapu Together," said Celia Guevara-Lucero. It will evoke memories of lunch breaks and merienda at the Lapu-lapu eatery, builds the buck on super-sized servings at the original "Sir" in Ayuntg's menu," remaining of push buffaloes, sana ice dulo, at ice-cubo, pansit luglug, and gulamansi-ugo.

STCM legacy

As though symbolic of the continuation of the STCM legacy, the program was put together by younger alumnae led by Agnes Dumon, whose graduation in 1988 completed the school's dozen. The program also commemorates the first positive graduation on the very same day in 1946, said Nicky Ribad.

In the same spirit, they moved Mia, SOA, Isabelita Chiru and, much later, Teresa Maldaspin, Theresians...who are requested to wear yellow or blue—will come together once again in a meaningful acclamation of "Alma Mater, we remember you."

Susie put it best: "The school may have been closed, but there was never closure in the alumnae's hearts."

STCM HEADS. The beloved landmark on San Marcelino Street, Ermita, Manila. Inset, Anne Marie 'Mia' Tan-Dello.

Manila cited as inventors' haven

By Leila B. Salaverria

INVENTORS are very much welcome in Manila.

The city government set up last week the Manila Inventors Help Desk, which serves as a conduit between inventors and national government agencies like the Department of Science and Technology and the Intellectual Property Office, as well as business and manufacturing offices.

The center is located at the office of the Non-Governmental Organization Secretariat, at the City government's Beside City Hall.

The assistance center was opened as the DOST cited Mayor Lito Atienza for his part in helping the city's inventors promote their creations.

Atienza was awarded a plaque of recognition for helping form the Manila Inventors Development Society (Minds), an organization that works with the city government to build exhibition where inventions could be showcased to the public.

"This DOST award encourages us to double our efforts for the promotion of Filipino inventions and their commercialization," Atienza said in a statement.

Minds and the Manila city government recently collaborated to hold technology exhibition and international inventors' competitions.

Among those who participated in these projects were: Two Manila high school students, who built also arrest us to win first prize in the competition they joined in the 2003 Asian Children's Inventions at the Kitakyushu Expo in Fukuoka, Japan.

Manila Science High school student Marvin Miguel Abiol, who was also chosen Mandaluyong's most bid inventor in 2003, won for his Browning Machine that removes grime from nail.

Mark Jonah Alegre of the Manuel Roxas High School built the Automatic Bottle Inspection Machine.

Atienza said the city government was conducting but workshop for inventors on that they would have access to funds for research and development and get scholarships or study grants.

He added that the city would also help inventors participate in international shows or contests.

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MetroBriefs

Liga election hit

THE OMCEC-ma president of Caloocan City Liga ng mga Barangay described as illegal the election held in September for the succession of slain Liga president Progelio Sarmiento. Abdon Cuesta, chair of Barangay Bagong Barrio, said he was supposed to succeed Sarmiento, who was killed in an ambush last Aug. 7. But Antonio Cruz, a group of barangay chairmen unlawfully installed an election another set of officers. The election took place Sept. 25 resulted in the election of Manuel Morong Bonoan. (Jhoi Rhodolfo Jarrete) Sarmiento's son will Caloocan City Vernon Edmund. **Tina G. Santos**

Police booths

TO HELP prevent crime in the different commercial centers in the metropolis, 39 four police response booths from here will be constructed in the next two months. NCRPO chief Director Avelino Razon

Buy safe toys

CAVE a gift, not a disaster. This, in effect, was the reminder of Sen. Manny Villar to people planning to buy gifts, especially for children. The senator said the market was littered with toys products that might even be harmful to children. Villar said that while the Consumer Act aimed to protect the buying public it did not provide safety guidelines, particularly to product labeling, where buyers to consult child or should be misled.

70th book week

THE NATIONAL Bookstore Committee of the Philippine Literature Associations, Inc. (PLAI) and the National Library will be celebrating its 70th National Book Week on Nov. 29 to 30. It will kick off with a run that at 6 a.m. starting from the National Library on UN Avenue corner Padre Burgos, Manila, Cavitex. At the PLAI assembly and luncheon will be held at the National Library. Ms. Linda Ty-Casper will be awarded the Jovellano Literary Award. Former Philippine Ambassador to Spain Carlos P. Romulo will be given the Hall of Fame award.

AU-FGCHS event

ALUMNI of Ateneo de University Grade School and High School are invited to the centennial grand alumni homecoming on Dec. 4 at 6 p.m. at the Bantad Hall of the Philippine Nursing Institute at Roxas Avenue in Makati. For inquiries call Lorna Montalbo at 896-3000/896-6701/539, Ana Marie Ubaldo at 815-3000/815-6701/539, Ana Marie Ubaldo at 815-3000/815-6701/539, Ana Marie Ubaldo at 815-3000/815

Junjun confirms he is available for top PSC post

JOSE "Junjun" Cojuangco Jr. yesterday confirmed that he "made himself available" to become the next Philippine Sports Commission chair.

He also admitted his friendship with Vice Gerthman Mike Arroyo, a former classmate in Ateneo, whom he is now officially backing.

CAJUETAN/INQ

If named, Cojuangco will be the PSC's 7th chairman since the agency's creation in 1998.

Cojuangco was the secretary general of the Manila Southeast Asian Games in 1991 and his knowledge would come in handy since the country is hosting the SEA Games again next year.

Balisacan shrugged off the critics saying, "as of now, it's all gossip," and reiterated that he's working at the pleasure of the President.

Granny Goose shocks Montaña, wrests lead

JAMES TOLENTINO (Pag Sports Intern)
3 p.m.—Bayanihan 101 vs Ala Philippines
4 p.m.—ATN vs Galleria Sports Bits Antipas

By Jaroslaw M. Pays

A TEAM with no superstars turned out to be the unlikely PBL Open Championship leader.

Granny Goose, the league newcomer now headed to the pre-season, stunned the second Montaña Purefoods, 79-72, yesterday to seize the lead at the Makati Coliseum.

"Initially, I was surprised with our performance but now I see say that we deserve to be on top. It was all about hard work and patience," said Tanduay coach Jun Sy after Granny Goose halted Montaña's five-game winning streak.

The Tanduay-based on a balanced offense led by Ben Cajudi and Art Labrador.

Granny Goose wrapped up its first round campaign with a five-game winning streak for a 6-1 record, while Montaña slipped to second at 5-2.

Earlier, Chester Tolentino continued to pose as Mikhail Blaise by scoring 28 points for a 98-83 triumph over Adidas Mobile Arrows.

With both teams' tight defense, Eugene Tan's side landed at the low post teamed one to be the winning basket for Webcast, still a minute and 15 seconds remaining.

"Our three losses came in the fourth quarter, so I think my players already know that they have to work hard. Both teams played good defense and I think it showed in our scores," said coach Caloy Garcia after the Paisanmasters moved up five third spot at 4-3.

"I'm satisfied that we're going into the second round two games ahead of the teams behind us," added Garcia.

Granny Goose seemed headed for an easy win in the closing minutes but saw its double-digit lead erased by Montaña's late surge.

"We lost our focus in the last quarter and relaxed. We thought it would be easy," noted Tan.

The Tanduay-based down to a 67-55 advantage into a double-digit spread, 54-39, late in the third quarter. Granny Goose took charge for a 16-point buffer, 62-46, midway in the final period.

Granny Goose remained comfortable with a 68-51 cushion, but the Juvees threatened with a 15-6 rally behind Joe Jose, Salvador and Fred Guerrero to slice the lead, 74-70, with only 26 seconds left.

Webcast rallied by two points after Jeuk the Montes fired a three-pointer to tie the Eagles, 11-11. But the Paisanmasters responded three of their next four free throws and an Allan Gamboa triple gave them a 54-50 advantage.

The Eagles had a chance to snatch the game but turned the ball over twice in the final minutes.

Tanduay
Tolentino 28, Labrador 15, Cajudi 12, Lamberto 10, Lucero 9, Cajudi 8, Gerhardt 6, Ramos 6, Cruz 6, Santos 6, Lumbi 4, Cosme 0, Valdez 2, Gervacio 2.

Montaña 72—Agustin 20, Salvador 15, Campos 12, Jose 8, Guerrero 7, Dela Cuesta 5, Lucero 4, Bagunu 0, Vergara 0, Baguio 0, Arce 0, Jumbiel, Sandico 0.

Quarters: 19-17, 29-32, 61-52, 82-72.

SPORTSWATCH

Antidrug race set Nov. 28

PANGASINAN is hosting another inter-disabled bicycle race, the ONP-Gen-Star Pangasinan Cycling Grand Prix, on Nov. 28. Elements of the race, a project of Pangasinan provincial director Dexter Gaut, Blacio G. Sandiego and fourther general manager Ramon V. Nuevo, will start in Dagupan City and finish in Lingayen, covering 178 kilometers, slated to Lingayen and Manila before ending up in Zelaneta City. Some 150 riders, hailing mainly from Pangasinan before winding

Sunday BIZ

E-mail us: business@inquirer.com.ph
Business Features Editor Margie Quiroz-Espino

Loaves of bread pulled him out of retirement

By Margie Quiroz-Espino

SAN JUAN: Ted D. Gerodi Jr. had his career path worked out. Even his retirement was a planned affair—he first studied finance. Knowing he was not a numbers man, then proceeded to marketing, which was his passion.

He chose a great firm to work with for his first job and worked out his retirement before he turned 50.

But he had no control over doing outside his jobs. And when he was about to become an entrepreneur, his convictions determined how it is.

"I was tutored and decided to go into entrepreneurship. But the economic condition was not good so I decided to go back to work," he relates.

In his very first job, as staff assistant of Procter & Gamble, he did not know how much his pay was. When he got his first pay envelope, it had over P600 for half a month's work.

He thought somebody made a mistake because his salary was more than the UP College of Business Administration were getting a monthly pay of P400. But P&G paid well and they knew how to entice the best from their people.

When he accepted his current position, he only knew he was joining a "bakery" which had a big brand name in Singapore and Malaysia but was not doing well in the Philippines.

First job

"I became a partner. I took a P1-million pay cut thinking the firm was good. My first office was in a small room where the boss was nervous and my chair would slide back. I had to rent space. It is clear if it shines, it bites small," Jun laughingly describes his first day as general manager of Gardenia Bakeries (Philippines) Inc.

Just talks about his work with such a passion one might say he found his calling in the latter part of his career life. And he is excited every time to step into it.

He admits he initially felt it was going to be an easy job when he accepted the post in 1999 and thought he could still pursue his entrepreneurial aspirations. But he realized soon enough the job was going to require his full attention.

Marketing problem

Had he known the problems of the firm was simply mothering.

On his first day he promptly received his business cards. Being a marketing man he gave these to all his friends.

He started his friends personally as he flipped the card and guessed out, "O bumili yung dito eh?"

They thought he was marketing for a brand called Gardenia.

As part of his job to promote his company's products, he would go to grocery stores to sell.

One grocery owner told him, "Look you can see I have a small store...Ikaw pa kaya'ng ibo-bonus sa akin? What will I do with your plans?"

Jun had to tell him, "We don't sell plans. We sell bread!"

When his wife asked him to buy a loaf of bread with the American flag he saw there was another one with an American flag.

After nine decades in marketing—with Smith Bell & Co., then Nestlé, Klim Corp., building brands like Tagaytay, then Hoover, Jun says he was the one who formulated the ad campaign at one time encourage man from to pressure the maid, and then as president of Dutch Boy Philippines Inc.—he immediately worked on selling Gardenia.

Sales have been on a constant rise and from an unknown brand, Gardenia has to become a household name in bread, which is a P5 billion market in the Philippines.

Gardenia opened its factory in the country in 1997. It is owned by GMF Limited of Singapore. GMF has divested operations that include holdings in Australia and Asia. Gardenia recently started a P700 million-capacity plant that will give it a capacity of 12,000 loaves per hour and 1,000 buns per hour by 2006.

Exciting and changing

By 2006, it would also have set up a manufacturing plant outside Metro Manila.

Jun, who has been assisting top corporate execs since 1997, says running Gardenia in terms of finance and operations, is basically the same as other firms.

"But what makes this different is the product. The market for bread and bread in particular is an exciting one that is constantly changing. In other companies you have long-term plans...five years, 10 years... In Gardenia you have daily plans!"

He says daily production decisions have to be made otherwise they will have a supply shortfall or an oversupply. Both of which will mean losses.

Jun knows they are the only bread maker which puts the guaranteed freshness tag in their packs. This is because they are the only ones who deliver daily and pull out unsold breads on a daily basis. This despite the fact that shelf life of their bread is one week.

He laughs that knowing the weather helps in determining their daily production. As his marketing

LOOKS U...

GARDENIA Boulevard (Philippines) Inc. general manager Singkico Umali Jr.

HE WAS half expecting a neighborhood bakery. What he saw was a state-of-the-art facility.

Mga inang dating nababahala, ngayon ay panatag ang loob. At ang mga health clinic ay dati'y nag-uumapaw sa pasyenteng may diarrhea, ngayon wala ang halos. "Buhos magpara na 'yung sa amin," wyan kay Eneano Saburido, residente ng Brgy. Mangguhon, Cainta.

Ang bangang nagkanya – bakig sa dati'y kinukulan kung mainuman, ngayon galing na lamang sa kisang lugar – Manila Water, isang ayala company.

Sa "Tubig Para sa Barangay" project, pinilitan ng Manila Water ang mga 425 kms. ng mga pipes at distributors lines para makapaghatid ng tubig sa 1.2 milyong katong proyektong may investment na PP billyon. Kaya ang tubig, di lang nagging masagana. Dahil dinadalay sa mga bagong pipes, naging garantisadong safe pa ito.

At simula pa lang ito. Sa kasinlang ika-7 taon, was maintain pang hahbang ang pagpanin ng Manila Water para maisagawala ng pagpatak lang sa mga barangay sa... gatkanan.

Manila Water
Dito sa tubig sa gatkanan.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is welcomed by Filipino employees of auction site eBay
(AMI CRUZ-PCO)

RP in the swim of things with eBay

By Bernie W. Damings
Philippine Daily Inquirer

PEOPLE used to say that Filipinos were too sociable to buy or sell goods over the Internet.

But with the launch last week of eBay's Philippine website, it's only a matter of time before Pinoys overcome their lack of confidence and place their bets on the great potential of doing business over the Internet.

They will then join the ranks of other countries that have embraced the benefits of buying online.

Consider this: a car is sold every hour in the US; a T-shirt every 16 seconds in China; a notebook every 18 minutes in South Korea; a cell phone every 20 minutes in Taiwan; a watch every five minutes in Hong Kong and a video game every 22 minutes in Singapore.

eBayph is the latest addition to eBay's global network that carries 29 markets including its home base, the United States.

eBay was founded nine years ago in the United States and soon has picked up another region through the launch of local websites.

The Philippine website, which will be in English, allows members to buy and sell items to anyone.

Individuals, as well as small entrepreneurs, can list with eBay and do business for free.

Frederic de Buzit, managing director of eBay Southeast Asia, says owning a dedicated website for Filipinos was a result of a strong demand from the company's "many thousands of members" who are based in the country.

"Members who want to sell locally are also free for free," De Buzit says. "The overall charge is the only fee (internet) transaction."

Also, De Buzit says there is a need for a local website considering that some items that members want to trade online may not be suited for other markets.

To what we already do, we are not taking commissions, since we only provide the venue for buying and selling," he says.

As for the method of payment, De Buzit says **this would be up to the website users to decide.**

"We will not impose a certain mode of payment, we would want our members to tell us what they want whether this be online payment or by cellular phones or by simply meeting up as the local seller does," he says.

De Buzit says eBay's strength lies in being "the most secure" online marketplace.

"Of all transactions that has taken place in eBay, 99.99 percent are without any fraud claims," he says.

He said meeting up as ordinary member of eBay De Buzit says the online trading hall was founded on the assumption that people are honest, that everyone has something to contribute and that an honest, open environment brings out the best in people.

"I bought my first item four years ago, and this is the driving search I am wearing right now," he says. "I was also able to sell my site through eBay."

Dubbed "The World's Online Marketplace," eBay has 125 million users worldwide and trading at least 68,000 categories of products and services.

There are 34 million items available at its global website at any given time, with some 1.5 million items added each day.

What is more remarkable is that eBay is taking in profits without advertising, making money only through fees collected on transactions.

Profitable since its launch, eBay net revenues totaled $802.8 million in the third quarter of 2004, De Buzit says.

Oldest country club counts down to 100th birthday

By Frank Cimatu
Philippine Daily Inquirer, Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Right after 87-year-old Virginia Orosco de Jesus rang a bronze bell last week, 100 green and yellow balloons flew off carrying the banner proclaiming the 500-day countdown to the centennial anniversary of Baguio Country Club.

Se Gesi, the first post-war Baguio mayor, also happens to be the oldest among the 1,000 holders of BCC.

A BCC member since the 1950s, she recalled having played golf on the BCC greens with former President Ferdinand Marcos while it was running.

"I sang the centennial bell three times with gusto. Only done to bring a centenarian. I felt it was nevertheless an honor," she said.

The centennial bell was a replica of what the musicians used to use to call their meetings to organize the BCC, which the city now still a members-called Kalingayan.

After passing a resolution in 1903 to make Baguio the summer capital of the archipelago, the American tried to make the settlement a sanitarium for tropical heat and diseases.

When, through a telephone system in 1903, the BCC was established on Feb. 28, 1905, making it the oldest social club in the country.

From a three-hole golf course, BCC has become a regular 18-hole golf course a few decades later.

It is reckon as the BCC can be seen at a spot behind the BCC multipurpose hall.

Anthony de Leon, BCC general manager, said the new 500 years would be the most challenging for the club.

He said the BCC management had submitted a 10-year development plan worth P1 billion during the stockholders' meeting.

Included in the plan are the construction of an additional log cabins and the rehabilitation of a new professional.

A new BCC building, a training center, a chapel, a multi-sports center, a main theater, a bathtub house and a butterfly garden and an orchid are also in the works, De Leon said.

The presidential suite and junior presidential suites were also inaugurated last week.

BCC has set up its centennial tree planting, where members and other sponsors can contribute 100 or more trees, preferably Caribbean pine, Mountain pine and the traditional Benguet pine.

For every 50 trees planted in the BCC property, 50 will also be planted in Baguio and Benguet.

A host non-government organization or barangay will adopt those planted outside of BCC and the donor can select where the trees will be planted.

De Leon said they are soliciting old photographs of BCC for possible publication in the centennial book.

To complete its centennial celebrations activities, BCC will hold a painting contest and sports events.

A street parade and grand fireworks display will be held on Oct. 31, 2005, the Centennial Day. Martin Navarro, who was born in Baguio City, will have a free concert, also on that day.

A centennial golf tournament will be held on Oct. 19, followed by a centennial tree planting and a costume ball.

THE BAGUIO Country Club starts the 100 day countdown to its centennial.

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Loaves of bread pulled him out of retirement

Francisco Gil
Inquirer Visayas

Antique Governor Salvacion Z. Perez (left) and Rep. Exequiel B. Javier (right) congratulate Gil Gonzales for his success in the bakery business.

Gil Gonzales, Governor Salvacion Z. Perez (left) and Rep. Exequiel B. Javier (right) congratulate Gil Gonzales for his success in the bakery business.

Store breathes new life into old bags

By Amy R. Ramos

DON'T throw out your old, torn, stained and even dilapidated bags just yet.

Bring your precious old Prada, Gucci, or even your strange-ukay-ukay bag, can be now again, after undergoing a unique makeover at The Bag Specialist, a one-stop-shop for bag aficionados.

"We bring bags back to life," Zenaida Cruz-Custodio, managing director of Martinique International Inc., one of the incorporators of The Bag Specialist.

Martinique also provides the technical know-how in terms of repair and service.

Incorporators Rommel and Christine Juan, on the other hand, take care of marketing and business promotion, respectively.

Unlike other bag retail and repair shops, The Bag Specialist does not only sell unique-by-designed bags. It also fixes, dyes, customizes and embellishes old, shabby bags to give it a more classic, fresh or trendier look.

"We usually take in bags with manifesting defects, dwarfs, semi-precious stones, metals and even indigenous materials. But we try to keep the original material intact, especially for the high-end bags like Gucci and Louis Vuitton," explains Custodio.

The Bag Specialist opened its first store last September in Market!Market! in Fort Bonifacio Global City and carries three labels—Martinique, Pa dis da and Lally Dixon bags.

Although the store is only a few months old, it has already acquired a reputation as well as a loyal following among its clientele.

Old timers

After all, the people behind The Bag Specialist are not exactly new players in the bag industry.

Having more than 21 years of experience in exporting bags, Edna Cruz is the busier behind Martinique, which is named after her youngest and only son, Martin. Cruz is also one of the directors of The Bag Specialist.

Cruz put up Martinique in 1982, even if she knew nothing about manufacturing and exporting bags.

"I'm so fussy in buying bags. I initially would buy leather bags and supply them to a local department store. Unfortunately my supplier decided to go directly to my buyers," relates Cruz.

Upset but unfazed, Cruz toyed with the idea of manufacturing and exporting bags, as suggested by her husband.

After much prodding from him, Cruz went and attending various seminars administered by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. The people from Tesda also helped them start the business.

But husband was right in pushing Edna to take business as Martinique bags were snatched by the United States, Japan and Europe. It has a showroom in Novaliches, Quezon City, exclusive to export buyers.

It was only this year that Martinique decided to go retail, through The Bag Specialist.

According to Cruz, it was all because of her daughter-in Custodio, who also has her own line of bags. Pa dis da, and Lally Cruz-Dixon, who owns the label Lally Dixon.

Class project

Custodio said in an earlier interview that Pa dis da is a play on the French phrase "pas de deux" which means a "dance by two," referring to the two sisters.

The Pa Dis da label was a project of Custodio, when she took up Masters in Entrepreneurship at the Asian Institute of Management. She opened her first store in Banawe Street last year.

While Martinique bags are highly popular in the export market for its craftsmanship and use of indigenous materials, Pa dis da bags cater to the Pinoy taste which is conservative but has a tinge of adventure in it. For sister, Dixon, designs some of the bags.

"Pa dis da bags usually mostly appeal to the working crowd. It can be for everyday use," says Custodio.

A Martinique bag can cost from P500 and up, while a Pa dis da bag goes for at least P900.

Lally Dixon bags, according to Custodio, are mostly sensible fabric bags and clutches that would appeal to women aged 35 years and above. They usually cost P600 and up.

Custodio, however, pulled out of Banawe when they opened The Bag Specialist.

She got the idea of putting up The Bag Specialist came from one of her classes about manufacturing.

"My professor was telling us that it's better not to go into service as an alternative to manufacturing since China's already dominating the market in that particular area," says Custodio.

She says that all along, she already had the idea of getting into repairing bags, adding the idea of customizing and selling old bags for customers.

"When I vacationed to Japan with Christine's husband, Rommel, I told him about it only in passing and he said it was a good idea," reminisces Custodio.

But it wasn't about

THE WOMEN behind The Bag Specialist: Cruz, Custodio and Juan

(PHOTO BY ARIEL CELIS)

a year later that Rommel and Custodio finally decided to sit on the plan and turn it into a profitable business. By July 2004, plans were finalized and The Bag Specialist debuted two months after.

As the first concept of its kind in the country, The Bag Specialist lives up to its dictum which is to "create, fix and repair."

Custodio, The Bag Specialist creates custom-made bags of export quality with intricate and delicate designs. It carries three labels to suit varying tastes of its customers.

Fix. Restoring bags has become a pleasant challenge for Cruz, especially those that are really old and are "in critical condition."

Restoration usually takes about a week or two, depending on the condition of the bag.

For a P1,00 depending on fee, a bag is "drug, mend" as in how high or grave its condition is and how much it would cost to fix it.

"Restoring the bags is a very intense process," says Christine. "You have to carefully match the colors and kind of the fabrics with the original material of the bag."

Christine adds that they have to get parts even which through the same leather tannery the original were.

"We make sure the restoration is done painstakingly and precisely," she says.

Custodio says they also had to study the different kinds of materials used for bags, especially the high-end ones, to match the fabrics.

Style. Not only can one get unique pieces from The Bag Specialist, but one can also have old, plain bags embellished with materials of their choice depending on the availability of materials).

Old bags with sentimental value can also be preserved, while precious bargain hunts can be jazzed up.

Despite the fact that having a bag restored or embellished might cost more than buying a new ordinary bag from a department store, Cruz says they have acquired a loyal throng of customers from the middle and upper classes, perhaps, because of the commitment they render in their work.

"It's more than just the money. We provide our customers value added service through the unique, ingenious bags we produce and the precision and service, however that we apply in our repair jobs," says Cruz. "With that, we have won their trust and confidence."

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Japan weighs more mobile firms for crowded market

TOKYO—Take a market where two out of three people already own mobile devices, prices are dropping and competition over new models gets fiercer by the day.

Not one normally likely to entice newcomers, especially with four operators already slugging it out.

But just five years after Japan's mobile phone industry consolidated into four operators, the government is considering opening the way for as many as three more.

Internet and communications firms like Softbank Corp. and eAccess Ltd. are lobbying hard for a place in an industry worth $60 billion a year.

They charge that NTT DoCoMo Inc., KDDI Corp.—the parent of operators Au and Tu-ka—and Vodafone K.K., a unit of Britain's Vodafone Group Plc have grown at the expense of consumers, who pay too much.

Some economists put the cost of owning and using mobile services in Japan at about ¥1,000 a year, compared with about ¥600 in the United States and roughly ¥250 in many spots in Europe.

But analysts say more competition would be the wrong way to go for Japan.

"Japan's market is not an oligopoly because there was a lack of competition. Rather, too much competition created the present structure," said Hiromichi Aotake, telecoms analyst at UFJ Tsubasa.

"If [the government] moves excessively toward the idea that operators shouldn't make money then they're not going to be able to expand and grow since they're going to be unable to invest in future technology," he said.

Japan has a history of failed mobile operators. Companies such as Tokyo Sky Maridan and Japan City Media disappeared as they were acquired by others.

In the last consolidation, IDO and DDI combined into KDDI's mobile unit in 2000 and Chuo Higa cellPhone and IDO joined Tu-ka with partners same together to operate as J-Phone in 1999.

Continuous have become even fewer since operators spend billions of dollars on third-generation networks. Handsets also continue to make as they have to have advanced functions such as high-resolution cameras, color screens and music technology.

Hitachi's Wooo

By Clarissa S. Batino

MANDAUE, THAILAND—Even after more than a decade of global leadership, Nokia shows no signs of slowing down.

After launching here three new models that will fight it out in different markets, the Finnish phone maker said it would unveil 10 new models next year or twice the number of the handsets launched this year.

Peter Ollikainen, director for business line management of Nokia Mobile Phones for Asia Pacific, admitted the company remained hungry and fearless.

On the edge

"We are not over here all the time. We are willing to keep on winning the race but without undue advertising competition. These things keep us on the edge," said Ollikainen in an interview with Philippine media here.

Nokia 3220, Nokia 6630 and Nokia 7710 will be available in the market by the first quarter of 2005. All these phones have cameras and can...7710 and 3220—are already equipped with programs to support advanced multimedia trends.

After making mobile phones a good substitute for cameras and computer games, Nokia plans to sell wireless handsets that can connect with radios and receive television signals.

Visual radio and Mobile TV are two of the tech multimedia trends the Finnish phone maker wants to launch in the next two years.

Mobile TV

Visual radio would allow wireless subscribers to interact with equipped radio services, join promos and surveys and vote in regions. Once Mobile TV is available, subscribers can be used would watch their favorite shows through their handsets.

Nokia believes there is demand for these new services.

A survey conducted in Berlin showed 45 percent were interested in the idea of accessing TV on their mobile devices and were willing pay for such a service.

The key, however, is the infrastructure that would support these new trends. And more importantly, who would foot the bill? Should it be the wireless service providers or the media outlets?

Both, according to Nokia, will have to. So the question of who should make the investment should be resolved quickly.

Nokia says most Asian cities have an advantage in rolling out the new technologies with the increasing convergence of telecom and media services. But this is not true yet in the Philippines.

The commercialization of mobile phones in most Asian cities, according to Nokia, should also help reduce the selling cost.

For media networks, the new technologies would give them alternative advertising outlets and new ways to sell new services. They could develop content that would primarily cater to mobile users.

Radio stations, in particular, should benefit as the wireless subscribers opens a new venue for psychology.

Mobile operators could attract new subscribers and also drive their data businesses to greater heights.

"TV is the new step. This should become commercially available by 2005 or 2006. We are encouraged with the way people are using devices to access more media," says a Nokia executive here.

The system is being tested on the Nokia 7700 with TV reception coming from a battery accessory called the Nokia Booster. The model is not yet commercially available.

Nokia says most Asian cities have an advantage in rolling out the new technologies with the increasing convergence of telecom and media services. But this is not true yet in the Philippines.

"

AWESOME belly dancers Charmaine Wong, Monica Llamas, Marnie Jimenez, Maryanne Lizmen, Marianne Zapanta and JM Arcaro.

My own Havana nights

Caribbean dancing allows me to dress to high heavens, while my Egyptian gig will allow me to come out of a sarcophagus, like a girl coming out of a cake

TESSA!

Jessa Prieto-Valdez

OUR countrymen's talents in the performing arts are notable throughout the world. Almost all of the hotels in Asia and virtually all cruise ships have Pinoy bands with their various homegrown singing styles. One can always detect if the band playing in the lobby is Filipino when the song "Feelings" is performed with our very own special emphasis on the "F" in the title. And although the classic "Avail" by Freddie Aguilar has been translated into so many languages, there is still that very Pinoy angst when a local belts it out.

Get Starstruck with Aladdin and Jasmine this Christmas!

You're mall I want for Christmas.

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AWSOMTWOSUM owners Nissa and Tina Stumpp

FUN couple Ravi and Shitty Daryanani

AMAZING Cuban dancers Ideni Medrazza and Grayda Linares

My own Havana nights

Pretenaga/C2

We must be the Latinos of Asia. We have so much passion for creative expression that we are continuously dancing or engaging in some kind of musical entertainment. At the midst of the season's merriment, there seems to be an abundance of music and dance in the air. The busy months of November has been filled with events with phenomenal wriggling bodies, oriental belly shaking moves, entire grounds grinding hips and just all out getting into the groove sounds.

Kicking off the first event of the season (as early was 91.5 Jerry's Global Groove' at the MBC fete at the Fort. The hit radio station's event included a Parade of Nations where guests displayed their costumes. There was flamenco, belly dancing and Filipino folk dancing together with performances by Carmina and Pepsy. The host singer of Carmina, Ribbon Mesa, also teaches salsa which I tried out but unfortunately could not continue.

I remember attending my first class in ball salsa dancing gear, or shall we say, my version of salsa from my evening wardrobe. My golf philosophy of "display structure cannot play" holds true in dancing. The moves will always look better in full costume even if you don't know the steps. And in the very least, salsa is another reason for me to wear my hair accessories and embellishments.

With a much better pass than cha cha, salsa is fun and spontaneous with no set routine or enforcer standard to follow. Although there are many distinctive salsa styles, one just moves into the rhythm. I totally enjoyed the class because aside from the wonderful prods, our, I got so engrossed with the sensual up and down wriggling of the hips. I could almost imagine my own real getting lower, thought I seriously doubt me class would have made a difference!

Shaking my belly

The next time I got back into the salsa rhythm was at the anniversary party of Ayala resins at Greenbelt. They had so many bands playing that I could not help but dance to one. All songs aside, checking my belly was much. The only real setback about being pregnant is that all my dancing activities have come to a halt.

Belly dancing has just been adding to that non-stop list of mine. I will have to just skim on my shoulders when I watch Carla Solaa strut your adore the Cuban Dance Spectacular comes over for a series of shows starting Jan. 14 at the PICC. After marveling at the unique performance of two Cuban dancers that evening, I will surely catch it once with my husband sticking out shoulder.

It is already becoming difficult to control my tummy with the costumes I presently have. From the Havana night, I had to come up with another ruffled outfit for the next non-stop salsa night at Cuvette Bar. My Australian bartenders joined the conga line and were entertained with the Cuban dancers and the organizer Pierre Bimo. Band. Rides graciously sponsored part of our evening as we are still raising funds for our batch's Reunion.

If you think it was difficult to find two salsa outfits in my wardrobe, you can imagine my concerns when I had to look for a third salsa outfit for the Caribbean theme birthday party of Ed Lacson. His creative wife Mila worked on all the details—from the fruit-covered bats that served as invitations to the Havana-catered food, and best of all, to the entertainment by the Bella band.

For Ed's entertainment, I hosted some limbo dark games and found that some of his guests were reluctant to join. As I invited them, they started telling me excuses including all their ailments ranging from arthritis to back problems to tonsil troubles. It was fun limbo, but in the end some brave souls did come up and do the limbo and even some tour jetées.

On Dec. 3, a challenge awaits my clothes closet—I still have two more months to fit in for another retro to Havana Makati. If you want to catch those stupendous Cuban dancers, do drop by. They are sensational and wonderful to watch, a nice sampling of the Lady Soles show coming next year.

Ecological gig

Still into the growing scheme of events, I attended Monsaya in Makati, a fund-raising project for La Mesa Eco Park by Charity queen Gina Lopez. I have speaked with Gina in the past but barely then, and when she asks for support, no one can say no! ABS-CBN talents hosted the well-attended swinging night at the MBC Tent, with my favorite Century Y and Ritmo Latino salsate performing '70s hits. Most of my friends were thrilled to have their photos taken with Tirso Cruz III of Goy and Pip fame. I guess all our ages were just arrested just by dancing salsa Gaya. Personally, I prefer Christopher de Leon. He has that Michael Douglas appeal to me... with a sweet dad he Richard Gutierrez-Sarah Geronimo fan.

Thanks dense. Bhutan is my fave diva, now that Lani Misalucha is on permanent holiday. I love her explosive emotion when she belts those Divas Anonymous. This is a rising star that will surely scorch international scenes soon.

Today is the finale to Gill versus' of Greggon Gray Dance School where I am a scholar although no discovery as I dance the dances but I am restricted from joining by my very protective OB, Dr. Annabelle Abuversa. And assuming to be part of it, my cousin Eva joins the finale, elaborate Egyptian saucepan along with two of the tallest dancers in the class, Nina Bautzenrieder and Lizzy Soares Gomez.

Always feeling larger than life, I think Show 3: Gill will be fabulous.

COUNTRY'S top dancing pair

CUBANS in motion

ASSUMPTION girls posing next to our Volvo sponsor

SALSA dancer at Dream Bar

CODIL doctor Jay Dupiador with cozy wife Bing

BIRTHDAY gentleman Ed Lacson and creative wife Mila

SHOW is Girl dance mistress Gregoire Gray

WONDERFUL friends Cris Manangsit and Raja Laurel

But don't take my word for it, try to catch one of the two shows (3:30 and 7:30 p.m.) at the MOA Auditorium. For all the single men out there, this show is a must see with the Tantalizing talents to get your tickets at the gate. Just ignore the big-bellied dancer that comes out of the largest sarong/lungi!

E-mail me at inquirersun@inquirer.com.ph

SUMMANG'S Show Stoppings and touches salsa.

SWINGING couple Jude and Dianne Aguilar

YOGA buddies Michelle Reyes, Cherry Do, Bebi Lipat and Benta Feliciano

LA Mesa supporters Ronnie Asuncion, Freddie Poblador, Gina Monteiro and Michael Escobar

GENEROUS Larrion Christopher de Leon, Michael de Mesa, Tirso Cruz III and Luke Mejares

PIP fans Maggie Go and Rosie Cruz with Tirso Cruz III

HAVANA guests Manny and Irene Ramos and Rex and Binay Mapa

CARIBBEAN guest Rosella Ramos and my salsa outfit No. 2

HIP siblings Howard and Tina Yap

HIGH-ENERGY Aerobicised

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday LIFESTYLE

KEEPING time with Tiffany /C6

ROBINSONS malls' focal attraction is an brilliant yellow-gold and embellished with dainty starflowers

Still a season of hope

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Rudy Caparas

YES, crisis or no crisis, there is no holding back Christmas. Robinsons malls get into the spirit of the season of joy, hope and love with its unique Christmas décor and carefully planned entertainment for the family.

"When things become complex and confusing, a meaningful Christmas celebration is welcomed by all of us," says Ms. Myra Robinsons Malls' general manager.

FULL STORY

The symbol of wondrous and most joyful news is the centerpiece of Robinsons malls' Christmas displays

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Teen celebrities in Christmas show

ALA malls start its celebration of the Christmas season with an Aladdin musical starring today's hottest teen celebrities.

Ayala Center Makati, Alabang Town Center and Ayala Center Cebu present "Aladdin and Jasmine get Starstruck," an original musical based on the animated classic about a boy who found a magic lamp.

Also recently playing the musical's lead pair are "Starstruck" survivors Mark Antonio Herras and Jennylyn Mercado, and Rainier Rainier Joseph Castillo and Yasmien Kurdi.

Songs used in the musical have received special permission from Sony Music. The original story of "Aladdin and Jasmine get Starstruck" was written by director Freddie Santos. The version

"STARSTRUCK" survivors with Boyd Flaire as Genie and Sheila Francisco as Fatima

MARK Herras and Rainier Castillo as Aladdin, and Jennylyn Mercado and Yasmien Kurdi as Jasmine

features a wacky genie and a feisty Jasmine, and introduces a new character, the sorcerer called Fatima, played by London West End stage star Sheila Francisco.

Playing the slightly erratic genie is Boyd Flaire.

The supporting cast is composed of stage artists from Gerazon, Trumpets and Repertoire.

Winnie Hasseerik, vice president for Marketing & Entertainment Business of Ayala Land Inc., says the show, which the whole family can enjoy, is free.

Playdates for "Aladdin and Jasmine get Starstruck" are:

Ayala Center Makati—6:00 p.m., Dec. 2; 6:30 p.m., Dec. 3; 11:30 a.m., 2 p.m., 4 p.m., Dec. 4; 11:30 a.m., 3 p.m., 6 p.m., Dec. 5

Alabang Town Center—5 p.m., Dec. 10; 3 p.m., 6 p.m., Dec. 12; 11 a.m., 3 p.m., 6 p.m., Dec. 13

Ayala Center Cebu—11 a.m., 4 p.m., 7:30 p.m., Dec. 18; 11:00 a.m., 3 p.m., 6 p.m., Dec. 19

Market! Market!—2 p.m., 5 p.m., Dec. 21

Metropolis—6:30 p.m., Dec. 21

Festival Mall—6 p.m., Dec. 22

A LIFE-SIZED Gingerbread House will not only be a unique attraction at Robinsons Galleria but also Santa Claus' residence this Christmas.

A REPLICA of the Christmas Village to be set up at the sprawling grounds of Robinsons Starmills Pampanga. The Christmas Village will feature a number of moving characters and lighted scenes depicting Filipino traditions such as simbang gabi and caroling.

Still a season of hope

From page C1

Message of hope

This year's Robinsons malls winter show makes the Star of Bethlehem the central figure to convey a timely message of hope. The mall's Star of Bethlehem is no brilliant yellow gold and embellished with dainty cut-lines.

Instead, features Christmas stars in pastel—apple green, purple pink and cornflower blue—complemented with gingerbread star and ball rosettes. The entire Christmas tableau is showered with snowflakes.

A gingerbread house will be put up by SBC Floor Mills Division at the second level of Robinsons Galleria. It will be Santa Claus' "quarters" where he visits in December. Also, Santa is scheduled to make three Dec. 4, 5, 11 a.m., 12 n.n., 12 n.n-2 p.m. and 6 p.m.-7 p.m., Dec. 11-26, 12 n.n-2 p.m. and 6 p.m.-7 p.m.

A series of activities will also mark the unveiling of these unique outdoor displays.

Robinsons Place Novaliches will be lit by a giant outdoor Christmas tree. Estimated to be over 90 ft tall, the Christmas Tree will be filled with bright lights, colorful lanterns, poinsettia buds, bells, silk flags and a thousand Touch lights. It will be topped by a three-dimensional Star of David. A fire show and fireworks display has been scheduled for 5 p.m., Dec. 5.

Christmas village

Robinsons Gateway Pampanga will have a Christmas Village, in deference to the province's reputation as the Christmas capital of the Philippines. To be installed on the complex's sprawling grounds, the village will feature a number of moving characters and lighted scenes depicting Filipino traditions such as simbang gabi and caroling.

Of course, Pampanga Jasmine will be prominently displayed. Flying angels and thousands of lights complete the setup. The colorful display will have several moving parts synchronized with Christmas music.

A ceremonial lighting to open the display to the public formally will be held on the evening of Dec. 4. A celebrity show and Grand Fireworks Display is set for 7 p.m.

The newly opened Robinsons Place Pampanga, Robinsons Ermita Corp.'s 11th shopping mall, will have a life-size display dominated by Santa Claus on the rooftop. Enormous moving toys, large gift boxes and other trimmings will immediately be seen.

In addition to the usual bright stars, colorful balls and blinking lights, there will be a rocket ship ready to take off, an elephant with a moving trunk, a rocking horse and a toy soldier.

An outdoor Christmas event featuring popular celebrities will be held at 5 p.m., Dec. 5, to unveil formally the Santa display.

Looney Tunes

Robinsons Malls will also bring the lovable Looney Tunes characters this holiday season.

"Just like in the past, Robinsons tries to offer worthwhile entertainment for the family. The fun loving characters of Looney Tunes (performance) will deliver a message of friendship and sharing," says Janice Lorenzo, Robinsons Mall's advertising and promotions director.

"Christmas with Looney Tunes at the Robinsons Malls," a series of live shows and meet-and-greet activities in Robinsons malls in Metro Manila and the provinces starts Nov. 27 and runs until Dec. 17.

Classic Christmas and Looney Tunes themes will be the musical backdrop for a mini-show featuring Tweety, Tasmanian Devil, Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck. Songs include "All I Want for Christmas," "I Tawt I Taw Ol Tan O'Clear" and "Hello Looney Christmas Medley."

The five Robinsons protected malls, meet-and-greet sessions will feature Elmer Fudd, Pepe Le Pew, Marvin the Martian and Pepper's Lapham, who are making their debut appearances in the Philippines.

Scheduled appearances of Tweety, Tasmanian Devil, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, Pepe Le Pew, Marvin the Martian and Pepper's Lapham are at: Clive shows and meet and greet, 4 p.m.) Robinsons Place Ma. Roxas, Nov. 27; Robinsons Place Lipa, Nov. 28; Robinsons Place Iloilo, Dec. 12; Robinsons Place Dumaguete, Dec. 12; Robinsons Place Pavilion, Dec. 18; and 30; Robinsons Galleria, Dec. 17; (meet-and-greet) Robinsons Place Bacolod (11 a.m. and 2 p.m.), Nov. 27; Robinsons Place Iloilo (2 p.m.), Nov. 30; Robinsons Place Cebu, Dec. 4; and Robinsons Place Angeles, Dec. 11.

ROBINSONS malls feature Looney Tunes' favorites Bugs Bunny and Tweety in a series of live shows and meet-and-greet activities.

Sunday LIFESTYLE

Problem hair

What to do with your monumental mess of a mane?
Sometimes it pays to pay a chi-chi stylist

By Elida Cardero Fernando

THERE were two of us who had that—Luz Ganzyczo's was a shock of wild hair that would not settle down; mine was lazy span eager that refused to be classed up. Even in the most important events of our college life, laughed Lucky Magsaysay, there the two of us were, in elegant prom gowns or billowy ballerinas, our hair—in stark contrast to the rest of the girls'—an unbelievable mess.

Most of my life had been spent in trying to prop up my curly fine hair. Tight curls, ironing, ironing, gel, mousse, hair spray, bobby pins. Once, I even considered adding swatches of fake hair to what seemed like monumental gaps in my hairdo.

Chi-chi cut

But one birthday Meg decided to gift me with a haircut. She herself had a chi-chi hairstyle for which she had been going to a British hairdresser in chi-chi that his shop in a Makati condominium even have a sign. Everything was so swanky by appointment. I was thrilled but apprehensive. My curl was three months old, flat straight enough to be pressed, not curly enough to stand up in a cue—or so I thought.

The chi-chi hairdresser turned my head gently this way and that. I told him it was problem hair. Ignoring me, he caressed the resisting curls. I told him that my hair was limp, had no body, had no sometimes. I told him that I could never have a good, everyday hairdo. Especially when it was half straight.

"You don't need a perm," he said finally. "I'll just cut it." His finger sifted through my hair several times.

"It's very hair," he said. I was shocked.

Slowly and lovingly, he cut. Off with the long, thin tail! The guy was all for a natural look. He just wanted everything to fall the way nature intended it to. Like those glamorous girls in the magazine. The cut was short and naughty. Longer on one side than the other so that it could flip over an eye. It made me feel young.

He finger-dried my hair a bit. Then he smoothed his hands.

"It's done?" I asked. "Aren't you going to gel it or spray it or something to keep it looking like that?"

I felt that the moment I got home, my hair would sit down and declare a strike. He shook his head. "Once made it anytime it needs to be washed," he said, "and it will look all right."

Like steel wool

But two whole days I didn't do anything with my hair, but it still looked great. But sadly I had an unending ceremony to go to. I panicked. I phoned the nameless shop for an appointment. The secretary said they were fully booked. I rushed to my old hairdresser who, upon my rushed advice, said, against her will, gelled my hair and volume-dried it and sprayed it. I got my hearing back. My hair felt like steel wool, but I felt secure the whole evening.

The following week I was so busy that I forgot to mess up with my hair. It was just there looking like sexy Cool mannequins. The moment I woke up, I was surprised to see it looking good by itself. Through the months, months, stuck to my head with perspiration and all, it looked good. The girls in the gym said so. So did the guys.

The second weekend, however, there was another event—an evening wedding. I was standing an interesting mood and overlooked the mirror. I forgot I had problem hair. Frantically, I washed and groomed and sprayed my hair and propped up the mirror with as many bobby pins as I could. Then I wore my most conservative dress. My hair looked exactly as it did in my prom picture.

Thereafter, whenever I meditated, I rubbed my hair in my meditation. Gradually, I shed off the pins, then the spray, but clung to the gel. There I let go half of the gel, admitting it with a fun dry. My hair looked like it did in the condo shop. So I stopped trying to duplicate it. Stephen was right. My hair was all right. Or fact, it was quite nice.

After that my hair and I began to coexist. I was never enough, and so I supposed was it. For months I had finally realized that a good hairdo, like touch of life, may be just a matter of loving he.

GATELINK runway clip (shown left) and cuff links, sterling silver with 18-k yellow-gold accents

GATELINK ID bracelet, engraved sterling silver with yellow-gold accents

ATLAS 18-k white-gold ring with diamonds

Time writ large

TIFFANY Hearts collection's charm bracelet, platinum and diamonds

ATLAS charm bracelet, 18-k yellow gold

So favorable is the Philippine market's potential that Tiffany is launching a bigger store in Rustan's Tower, and considering opening shops in other key metro malls

By Cheche V. Moral

WITH THE IMPRESSIVE sales growth of its men's watches alone, Tiffany & Co. is justified in its growing confidence in the Philippine market, fiscal crisis or not.

At invitation, in fact, the American jeweler will open early next month a bigger store in Rustan's Tower, Edsa, Mandaluyong City, in time for the holiday gift-giving season.

Rustan's is Tiffany's exclusive Philippine distributor.

According to Akram Eldemerdash, Tiffany & Co.'s director for international trade and sales, Tiffany sales in the Philippines tripled in the last two years. Its men's watch line, particularly the Mark collection, introduced here only a year ago, had an 84-percent sales growth compared to the previous year.

"We've always started when we hear news like that," says El-demerdash of the recent notice of fiscal crisis in the country. "Even luxury brands are invariably affected. But our history proves how we've survived tough times. When times are tough, do you go and buy a gift that will have no value in the long run? That's a waste of money."

With the rich sweetness of Tiffany items—from jewelry and watches to housewares...El-demerdash says even clients with a limited budget can find gift items that have intrinsic value, in a relenting to Tiffany's sterling silver collections.

"There's always value to time [Tiffany] blue box," he stresses.

Generating with the store opening next month is the relaunch of the Atlas jewelry collection, which the company is reviving. The Atlas design is characterized by bold and graphic Roman-numerical figures. Tiffany will also be introducing new jewelry collections previously unavailable locally.

"Our store here is very small compared to our store in, say New York, where we have a five-level store space," says the Tiffany exec. Even as the selections are limited, however, he assures clients they can order from the local stores any item in the catalog and "we'll ship it as long as the item is available in stock."

Sturdier look

For the fast-emerging market of Tiffany men's watches, it is also introducing the Latera from the Mark collection. Called the Tiffany Mark T/57, this mechanical watch features an even sportier, sturdier look, owing to the addition of vulcanized rubber in four of the eight T/57 models.

The T/57, named after the location of the Tiffany flagship store in New York City's 57th Street, comes in other stainless steel/18-karat-gold with vulcanized rubber accents, and in four models—mechanical time-date; mechanical automatic chronograph; quartz time/date; and quartz chronograph.

Eldemerdash says he has observed that "Filipinos, even the conservative ones, love watches. They're very knowledgeable. They know movements, the specs..."

T/57's parts are 3-mm-engineered, water-resistant up to 300 ft, and with a watch size of 8 inches that can be sized down to 6½ inches. T/57 is priced from $1,200 to $4,000.

With the popularity of large watches, El-demerdash says even women are buying the T/57 for themselves. In his estimate, women are now buying their own jewelry.

"It used to be that our clients were men buying for the women in their lives," he says. Jewelry remains the core of the Tiffany business.

A jeweler and watchmaker since the mid-1800s, Tiffany is known for its classic and timeless designs.

"We don't adhere to trends," El-demerdash stresses. "We had brooches in our stores even before knockers became trendy again."

Tiffany also kept making yellow-gold jewelry even when the in thing was white gold, he adds.

Eldemerdash sees the opening of the Tiffany store as very favorable. "Filipinos share the same shopping attitude with New Yorkers," he opines. "Our sales peak at Christmas and Valentine, both here and in New York."

So favorable is the Philippine market's potential that, according to Eldemerdash, Tiffany is already studying the possibility of opening stores in other key metro malls, and those in thriving provincial cities like Cebu.

E-mail the author at cmoral@inquirer.com.ph

AKRAM Eldemerdash, Tiffany & Co. director for international trade and sales

DIBE earrings, sterling silver

FRESH bracelet and ring, sterling silver

THE NEW Tiffany Mark T/57 men's watch, stainless steel and vulcanized rubber

ATLAS hoop earrings, sterling silver

GATELINK bracelet and ring, sterling silver with 18-k yellow-gold accents

JAZZ drop earrings, platinum with round and baguette diamonds

Sunday LIFESTYLE Travel

Tranquil Coron

Palawan's northern frontier is a nature adventurer's paradise, ideal for long weekends

Text and photos by Joel V. Nigos

THE SUN was already up when our vessel, Superferry's Our Lady of Medjugorje, finally docked at Coron port. I took out a map of the Philippines from my bag. "There we are," I told myself after I located Coron among the Calamianes group of islands. "So, we're in the northern tip of Palawan."

A group of Blue Link's staff, our host-tours to Coron, gave us a warm welcome. Then led us immediately to the boat which would take

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Tranquil Coron

From page C7

LIMESTONE cliffs on the way to Twin Lagoon

on the kayak contest the tunnel.

Going near the cliffs we heard water streaming down to the lagoon. Here, we noticed fresh water from the cliffs mixing with salt water. This gave a semblance of oil on the water. Sadly, the chemical reaction would eventually be the cause to die.

Geologists estimate that the limestone cliffs at Coron were formed some 180 million years ago. They were also said to be part of a continental slab that is now Southeast Asia that drifted off some 90 million years ago. This makes Coron's origin different from the rest of the Philippine islands.

Treasure Island

At Treasure Island, so-called because Dawn's uncle that says there was a person who found gold bars here, the limestones are tall. The island is also famous as a turtle nesting area. We were not lucky since we did not see the turtle hatchlings going to the waters.

The beach has fine white sand and the waters are ideal for snorkeling. A short dive would give you a view of some coral reefs damaged in the past, but are now recovering. Starfishes, which are either red or blue, are everywhere. There are also some small formations fabricated causing fish—called fish because they are said to clean the gills of the larger fishes.

Our tour guide said that there are still some fishes like seahorses, clown fish, sea cucumber, sea urchin and starfish lurking. The presence of tourists frequently visiting the place provides a big help, though. This discourages fisher folk from inflicting further damage to the reefs.

There are no permanent residents in the island and our tour guide told us that Dawn has plan to build one in the future.

Japanese shipwrecks

Coron is also where some of the less preserved Japanese ship wrecks from the Second World War could be found. Some say that during the latter part of the war, the Japanese fleet retreated to Coron because they believed they were safer there because of its isolated cores. But the American air forces were still able to find them. As the Japanese retreated, the Americans continued to pound on them as their cargo ships and gunboats sank one by one. The first shipwreck we visited was the Irako Tangan gunboat, a good 30-minute boat ride from Give Link resort.

Still in "good" still preserving, Lusong, an other Japanese shipwreck, was like a haunted house submerged in the waters. Aside from the wrecks, interesting coral reefs and other marine creatures are also present in the area. The rubber Lusong shall for diving and snorkeling.

We also went to the skeleton wreck of another Japanese cargo vessel. Only five meters away from the beach, the wreck lay about 14 meters deep.

We also tried the waters at the Maquinit Hot Spring. Maquinit has salt water coming from the mountains instead of the fresh water hot springs we are familiar with.

Climbing Mt. Tapyas, with its more than 700 steps going to the huge cross was a challenge. It provided us a breathtaking view of the islands of Coron, which made the trek worthwhile.

Ideal

The stunning scenery and relative tranquility make Coron ideal for weekend holidays. Since Supercferry usually leaves Manila Friday night and takes about 10-12 hours, you'll reach Coron port by early morning Saturday.

By then, you would have already rested the whole night and be ready for the first series of adventures on the islands. Going back, you could again take Supercferry, which leaves Coron Sunday night and after sleeping it over for seven-eleven, you'll reach Manila Monday morning.

By air, it usually takes an hour to reach Busuanga airport, plus a good 40 minutes by land transfer to the town of Coron. SunAir and Asian Spirit fly the route during weekends.

The trip to Coron, Palawan, was made possible by Wow Inkot Connections, Wow Hotel, with its Sweet Deals & Free Indulgence promos. Call 845-2250.

BRIGHT colors greet you at Give Link, nestled on Uson Island.

TREASURE Island, so called because commonly found gold bars there centuries ago, has red limestone cliffs, white sand beach and crystal-blue waters.

SUNSET on the islands. Photo taken atop Mt. Tapyas, more than 700 steps from Coron town.

LIMESTONE limestone cliffs in culminating into formations. Geologists estimate the cliffs were formed some 180 million years ago.